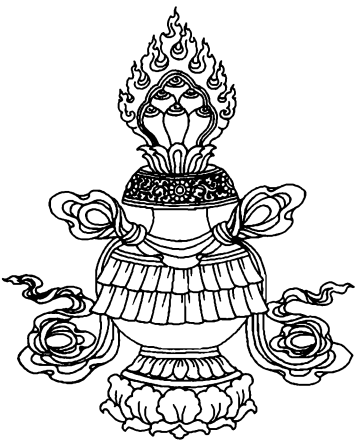
CHÖGYAL NAMKHAI NORBU

THE PRECIOUS VASE

INSTRUCTIONS ON THE BASE OF SANTI MAHA SANGHA



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This book should be treated with maximum respect and is intended for the use of those who have received the related transmission and teaching from the Master.

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PREFACE

This text contains the teachings of the Base of Santi Maha Sangha, a training of study and practice in nine levels devoted to deepening knowledge of the Dzogchen or Total Perfection teaching. The basic elements of this training can be found in cryptic essential form in the poem *Santi Maha Sangha*, written in 1985 by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, of which an English translation has already been published. Subsequently in 1992 the first volume of the course itself appeared: *The Precious Vase (Santi mahā sangha'i rmang gzhi'i khrid rin chen bum bzang)*, followed by an abbreviated version with some new additions titled *The Wish-fulfilling Vase (Santi mahā sangha'i rmang gzhi'i khrid rin chen bum bzang gi dgongs don snying por dril ba 'dod 'jo'i bum zang)* and a booklet for preparing the exam questions (*Santi mahā sangha'i rmang gzhi'i rgyud byang)*. The version translated here is based mainly on a revision of *The Wish-fulfilling Vase* made by the author in 1996, with the addition of several passages from the original text *The Precious Vase*, and it is with the latter title that it is here presented to readers.

The Santi Maha Sangha training, as mentioned above, embraces nine levels of study and practice of the three series of Dzogchen: Semde, Longde and Mennagde. Each level treats exhaustively the three fundamental aspects of view, meditation and behaviour in relation to the state to be achieved. The Base, that constitutes the foundation of knowledge and experience of the practice of Dzogchen, devotes a large amount of space to the sutra and tantra traditions and at the same time it also contains specific instructions that enable practitioners to realise the authentic state of Dzogchen.

In conclusion, here are the original words of the author, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: "In the root text of Santi Maha Sangha there are four lines which indicate the base needed in order to prepare for the ensuing levels. A person who has engaged precisely in the contents of this book as regards both theory and practice can proceed to the first level. However, in order to follow the Dzogchen teaching, knowledge of this 'base'

is indispensable also for those who do not intend to take part in the Santi Maha Sangha training."

Adriano Clemente

NOTE

The original title of Tibetan texts quoted as primary sources is given only the first time they are cited.

Square brackets indicate original notes appearing in the texts quoted.

The scientific transcription of Tibetan and Sanskrit terms can be found in the notes and indices.

Notes found in the original Tibetan text are marked O.N.

Notes marked (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu) indicate oral explanations by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu or taken from other works written by him.

To distinguish the Author's words from those of quoted texts the latter are marked ⌘.

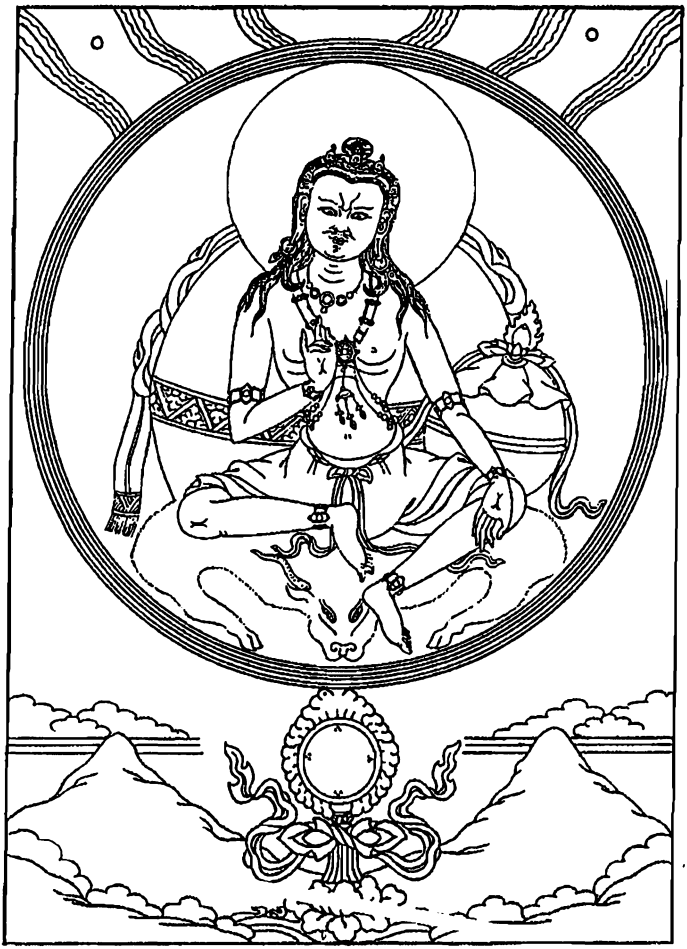
NOTE TO THE NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION

This is a new English translation of *The Precious Vase*. Although the original plan, as suggested by Adriano Clemente, was to integrate the previous very fine translation of *The Wish-fulfilling Vase* made by John Shane, there are so many changes and additions in this new edition that I decided to retranslate the whole book.

Andrew Lukianowicz

THE PRECIOUS VASE

INSTRUCTIONS ON THE BASE OF SANTI MAHA SANGHA



Garab Dorje

Homage to the gracious teachers!

***

Offering respectful homage to the gracious teachers
Whose essence is the letter OM[1],
To benefit those who are on the path
I will show the precious vase[2] of perfection.
Ocean of Dakinis and Protectors of the teachings,
I ask your permission!

OM AH HUM

A

[1] In this case the letter OṂ represents the three *kāya* (*dharmakāya*, *saṃbhogakāya* and *nirmaṇakāya*) and the three states of Body, Voice and Mind. See the explanation of "Understanding through the nature of the letters" in Chapter Five: 2.8.9.1.

[2] The precious vase, one of the eight auspicious symbols (*bkra shis rtags brgyad*), represents the fulfilment of all wishes.

Buddha Shakyamuni

PART ONE

HOW TO PREPARE ONESELF FOR THE BASE OF SANTI MAHA SANGHA

Padmasambhava

Just as a person who wishes to build a tall majestic palace must first of all lay stable foundations, in order to enter the swift and deep teaching of Atiyoga[3] it is indispensable first of all to build a perfect base that will enable the meaning of the teachings to arise with certainty within ourselves. It is to this point of extreme importance that the following four lines of the root text *Santi Maha Sangha* refer:

The base of the teaching consists in studying, meditating and experiencing perfectly
The Buddha's perfect teaching contained in the sutras and tantras
And the perfectly connected method and their essence, that is the teaching of the Mind of Samantabhadra
By means of the tantras, lungs and upadeshas[4] of Total Perfection and of Yantra Yoga.

(Santi Maha Sangha, 7)

[3] According to the ancient tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, Atiyoga (*gdod ma'i rnal 'byor*) or 'primordial *yoga*' is the name of the ninth and supreme way of realisation, defined as 'the teaching of the Mind of Samantabhadra', often called rDzogs chen or rDzogs pa chen po, 'total perfection'. The author explains: "Ati is a term in the language of Oḍḍiyāna equivalent to the Tibetan *gdod ma* or 'primordial' and refers to the original state of self-liberation; *yoga* means true understanding of this state within oneself. rDzogs chen does not mean only the way of self-liberation, for this name is also used to designate the final goal or accomplishment of the practices of Anuyoga." (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu)

[4] The *tantras* (*rgyud*) are the fundamental scriptures containing all the teachings concerning the base, path and fruit of Dzogchen. In fact, it is said that in the infinite worlds of the universe there are six million four hundred thousand *ślokas* or quatrains of *tantras*, only some of which are found on earth. Consequently many realised Vidyadharas extracted deep instructions and methods from the most important *tantras* that were unknown to us and imported them into the human world: these are named *lungs* (*āgama*). The *upadeśas* (*man ngag*) are essential teachings ensuing from particular experiences of the Vidyādharas, also based on the *tantras* and *lungs* (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu).

CHAPTER ONE
THE MUNDANE VIEW AND THE SUPRAMUNDANE VIEW

By and large we can discern two distinct categories of views in our world: the mundane (or samsaric) view and the supramundane view (that completely transcends samsara).

1. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MUNDANE VIEW AND THE SUPRAMUNDANE VIEW

Which are the differences between the mundane path and the supramundane path which transcends samsara? *The Encyclopedia of Knowledge (Shes bya kun khyab)* by Jamgön Kongtrul says (op. 32, vol. 2, p. 359, 13):

> ⌘ A person who adheres to a philosophical system can be distinguished (by the following points): by whether or not they accept or not as their view the 'four signs' of the Buddha's word; by whether or not (they practise) a meditation that should become an antidote to (the level of realisation called) the 'peak of existence'[5]; by whether or not they relinquish the two extremes of self-mortification and insatiable craving, as regards behaviour; by whether or not they recognise the truth of cessation as the special state in which there is no more negativity to overcome, as regards the fruit of liberation. *Luminous Discipline ('Dul ba 'od ldan)* says:

[5] The peak of existence (*srid pa'i rtse mo*), equivalent to the dimension of neither being nor non-being (*yod min med min skye mched*), is the highest level of existence that can be achieved in *saṁsāra* and is the result of the practice of the 'formless' meditative absorptions that constitute a deviation in relation to Buddhist meditation. Also see note 22.

It perfectly teaches the three trainings,
It perfectly possesses the four signs,
It brings virtue at the beginning, the middle and the end:
In this way the wise recognise the word of the Buddha.

The 'four signs' are the four epitomes of Dharma, as one can read in *Infinite Secrets (gSang ba bsam kyis mi khyab pa)*:

The Tathagata has epitomised all dharmas in four aphorisms:
Everything compounded is impermanent;
Everything contaminated by passions[6] is suffering;
All phenomena are devoid of independent being;
Nirvana (the condition beyond suffering) is peace. ⌘

The fundamental difference between the path that transcends samsara and the mundane path thus lies in the fact that the former teaches the three trainings of morality, contemplation and discriminating wisdom, that are the ground of the teaching, and in the fact that its base is composed of the 'four signs' that delineate the Buddha's view.

2. THE MAIN MUNDANE VIEWS

The Garland of Views (Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba) by Padmasambhava states (op. 21, A: p. 160, 2; B: p. 17, 1):

⌘ In the world there are countless mistaken views upheld by sentient beings, but we can subsume them in four types: (those of) the Chalpas, the Gyangphenpas, the Murthugpas and the Mutegpas. ⌘

Thus basically all samsaric views can be subsumed in these four schools.

[6] In general the Tibetan term *zag pa*, here rendered 'contaminated by passions', stands for everything that is conditioned by the material or worldly sphere.

2.1. The view of the Chalpas

From *The Garland of Views* (op. 21, A: p. 160, 3; B: p. 18, 2):

⌘ The Chalpas do not understand whether or not all phenomena have a cause and an effect, for which reason they are completely ignorant. ⌘

This passage is elucidated thus in Jamgön Kongtrul's commentary called *Light of the Sun (Nyi 'od)* (op. 11: p. 284, 4):

⌘ Who are the Chalpas? They do not examine whether or not all phenomena derived from the five aggregates[7] have some kind of cause and effect, nor do they examine whether or not there exists a world (after death), so they do not have understanding. They act driven by the pleasure of the present life as it appears to them, and since they do not think at all about the true final aim of the individual they are completely ignorant of it.
(In order to understand) the term chalpa (lit. 'flat') the example is used of a completely flat surface without any slopes up or down. In fact, as they are not concerned to act for the benefit of future lives on the basis of what should be accepted or refused they do not think they have to 'rise' upwards by accumulating virtue nor do they fear 'falling' into the pit of the hindrances of negative deeds but (instead) are satisfied solely by obtaining happiness in this life, enjoying a calm condition. ⌘

2.2. The view of the Gyangphenpas

From *The Garland of Views* (op. 21, A: p. 161, 5; B: p. 18, 3):

⌘ The Gyangphenpas do not understand whether or not every

[7] The five aggregates (*skandha*), that according to Buddhist philosophy replace the I or person, are: form (*rūpa*), sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saṃjñā*), mental formations (*saṃskāra*), consciousness (*vijñāna*). Also see note 112.

life has its previous or future (existence) and so they try to obtain dominion, riches and power for this life alone, making use of worldly secret formulae. ⌘

This passage is elucidated thus in Jamgön Kongtrul's commentary (op. 11: p. 285, 2):

⌘ Regarding the Gyangphenpas, according to some teachers the term Jigten (lit. 'of the world') Gyangphen found in the sutras is probably used to designate non-Buddhist schools in general, (but) Gyangphen is also a synonym of Barhaspatya, one of the five non-Buddhist schools[8]. In any case scholars contend that (this name) indicates those who do not follow any philosophical trend. Thus they do not understand whether or not a past and future life exist or whether or not the law of cause and effect of karma exists. In order to obtain the special pleasure of the higher states, such as dominion, riches and power etc., they use mantras of the rig ngag type[9] such as the secret formulae taught by Rishis and worldly deities. All of this, clearly explained in (our) text, is fully in accord with the (statement) above. The name Gyangphen (lit. 'that hurl afar') derives from the fact that in thought and

[8] The five main non-Buddhist philosophical streams (*tar ka sde lnga*) are: Sāṃkhya (*grangs can pa*), Aiśvara (*dbang phyug pa*), Vaiṣṇava (*khyab 'jug pa*), Jaina (*rgyal ba pa*), Barhaspatya (*phur bu ba*). The first four uphold the view of eternalism, the fifth that of nihilism. Regarding the Barhaspatya or followers of Bṛhaspati, *The Treasury of Philosophical Systems* (*Grub mtha' mdzod*) by Longchenpa (op. 5: p. 70, 1) relates that in the world of the Thirty-three Gods, in order to arouse enthusiasm in the Devas and to enable them to win the war against the Asuras, Indra's preceptor Bṛhaspati composed a treatise called *The Essence of the View* (*lTa ba'i snying po*) that refuted past and future lives, the law of cause and effect of *karma*, and liberation. Some lines from this text, which was subsequently spread in the human world by Vālmiki, state:
While you live take joyous delight, o noble lady!
When you die this will no longer be possible.
Your body will become ashes:
How can it ever be reborn? (O.N.)

[9] The *mantras* called *rigs sngags* have the characteristic feature of always having specific functions related to diverse requirements or needs.

behaviour they take no concern whatever or 'hurl afar' (any concern) about their future lives. ⌘

2.3. The view of the Murthugpas

From *The Garland of Views* (op. 21, A: p. 161, 1; B: p. 18, 3):

⌘ The Murthugpas maintain that all phenomena are devoid of cause and effect, for which reason everything that manifests in a life arises by chance and dissolves at the end in the same way. ⌘

This passage is elucidated thus in Jamgön Kongtrul's commentary (op. 11: p. 286, 1):

⌘ As regards all phenomena derived from beings' aggregates, the Murthugpas do not understand that, as there exists a primary cause due to previously accumulated karma and a consciousness congruent with it, no limit can be set on previous (lives). (They also do not understand that) at death the stream of consciousness that enfolds the sensations experienced at the moment of death becomes the effect in the next (life) and that, as in that (life) too one is constrained to follow happiness and suffering according to karma, no limit can be set on future (lives). Thus they do not acknowledge the manner of transmigration in samsara, as they base (their belief) on the fact that they cannot see (any concrete proof) and trust entirely to appearances, asserting that no previous or future lives exist and nor do karma and its ripening. They uphold the nihilist view, which holds that all aggregate phenomena related to sensation, perception, consciousness etc. that manifest in a life arise by chance and finally dissolve, like a mushroom sprouting (by chance) in a field. Although they admit the existence of an independent I in nature, in any case they deem that this I does not exist before and after (its appearance). ⌘

2.4. The view of the Mutegpas

From *The Garland of Views* (op. 21, A: p. 161, 2; B: p. 18, 4):

⌘ The Mutegpas[10], on the basis of their analysis of the totality of phenomena, uphold the existence of an eternal self. Among them in particular some affirm the existence of an effect but not of a cause; others misconstrue the law of cause and effect; others again sustain the existence of a cause but not of an effect. These are opinions that derive from ignorance. ⌘

Thus there are three main subdivisions within this view.

2.4.1. The view that refutes the cause but affirms the effect

Let us read Rongzompa's commentary (*Rong zom lta 'grel*) to *The Garland of Views* (op. 31: p. 189, 4):

⌘ (Here it is maintained that) what is called 'nature' does not depend on primary and secondary causes, has no form, is not produced by the mind, cannot be decomposed into sundry aspects and particularities, but is (instead) deemed immutable and eternal. This does not mean that nature is a kind of cause whence other things derive as effect: in fact they believe that all animate and inanimate phenomena are this very nature itself. They define everything that we experience as impermanent, being tied to cause and effect, growth and decay etc., as the 'provisional property' (of this nature), but no separation exists between nature and its provisional property. In this regard they cite the example of gold, that when covered with mercury changes its colour but not its nature.

[10] In Sanskrit *tīrthika*, a name probably derived from the Hindu custom of going on pilgrimage to sacred places called *tīrthas*.

This (view) is also called 'belief in the single self' or 'belief in a concrete substance'[11]. In fact they believe that all material reality exists from the beginning without ever having had a cause, thus this is also defined as the 'view that refutes the cause but asserts the effect'
If one were to object: "But how can you maintain an effect without a cause?" (they reply that) when they explain that all existence is not an effect this is (to be understood as) like the sky that exists from the beginning. ⌘

2.4.2. The view that misconstrues the law of cause and effect

From Rongzompa's commentary (op. 31: p. 190, 4):

⌘ (The texts) that uphold the view that maintains Ishwara[12] as the prime cause state:

Ishwara alone leads
To the abyss or to the higher states...

This Ishwara is deemed an individual that exists since primordial time, is eternal, magically emanates and dominates all phenomena and so on. Thus, while Ishwara is deemed eternal his emanation is impermanent. As (his disciples) believe that physical happiness and suffering too depend on whether or not Ishwara is propitiated, in order to propitiate him they perform non-virtuous actions such as sacrificing animals in fire, believing that in such a way they are able to attain the happiness of the higher states. Therefore their view is said to misconstrue the law of cause and effect. ⌘

[11] In Tibetan *bdag gcig pur 'dzin pa* and *ril por 'dzin pa*, respectively.
[12] Here Iśvara (*dbang phyug*), one of the fundamental concepts of Indian philosophy, is simply synonymous with Śiva in the sense of a supreme individual entity.

2.4.3. The view that affirms the cause but refutes the effect

From Rongzompa's commentary (op. 31: p. 191, 3):

⌘ (The texts) that uphold the view that maintains that a creator is the prime cause state:

Self is eternal, mind is changeable.
Just as a little bird flies out when its cage breaks,
That which is reborn is eternal,
The size of a thumb or mustard seed.

In this way they explain that the creator 'self' exists in all sentient beings, free, eternal and immutable, (commonly) denominated 'sentient being', 'person', 'individual' and so on. In conformity with the size of the body it inhabits it too can be large or small, and (furthermore) it is precisely that which transmigrates from one body to the next.
In this regard, some maintain that it is similar to a pure crystal; others that it is an individual endowed with infinite light reciting the *Vedas*[13]; still others that it miraculously assumes the guise of the body (it is inhabiting) and is thus born as a sentient being. There exist these and various other theories.
This (view in any case) is based on three considerations:
- The eternal self only carries out the act of creation as cause.
- The nature of the effect, the aggregate created therefore, is impermanent and changeable.
- This effect can manifest once only and cannot produce other aggregates, hence it dissolves. ⌘

[13] *Rig byed kyi smreng 'don* means reciting the sacred verses of the *Vedas*. (O.N.)

3. THE SUPRAMUNDANE VIEW

The Garland of Views states (op. 21, A: p. 161, 4; B: p. 18, 5):

⌘ The path that transcends samsara is subdivided in two categories: the Philosophical Characteristics Vehicle and the Vajra Vehicle. ⌘

Rongzompa explains the meaning of their names (op. 31: p. 197, 1):

⌘ The tradition that mainly teaches the (various) characteristics (of phenomena) is called the Philosophical Characteristics Vehicle. In fact it discloses the general and particular characteristics (of a phenomenon), the characteristics of the (impure) dimension of the emotions and those of the totally purified dimension and so on. The Vajrayana does not teach mainly these characteristics but is so called because it discloses that everything is inseparable in the vajra-like nature of Body, Voice and Mind. ⌘

The view that transcends samsara too comprises two subdivisions: the view of followers of the Causal or Philosophical Characteristics Vehicle and the view of those who follow the Fruitional or Secret Mantra Vehicle[14]. These constitute the principal theme of this book.

[14] The Causal Vehicle or Sūtrayāna is so called because in it the nature of mind is like a 'seed' of enlightenment requiring the completion of the accumulation of merit and wisdom in order to ripen. Here the two truths, absolute and relative, are seen as two separate things, the former to be obtained and the latter to be overcome. The Fruitional Vehicle or Vajrayāna is so called because the nature of mind is deemed already endowed with all the qualities of the 'fruit' of enlightenment. In fact this nature is introduced by the teacher through the initiation as the inseparability of the two truths and is then applied as the path according to the tantric method being utilised.

Longchenpa

CHAPTER TWO

THE WAY TO ENTER THE TEACHING THAT TRANSCENDS SAMSARA: THE SIX PRELIMINARY POINTS

How should the supreme path be approached that enables one to realise for oneself and for others the definitive and incomparable benefit of liberation, access to the peace of nirvana? *The Treasure of Secret Instructions (Man ngag mdzod)* by Longchenpa states (op. 22, p.1b, 4):

⌘ Firstly, the six preliminary dharmas are:
Cultivating the three trainings, the foundation of the path;
Studying without limits the various fields of knowledge;
Calming body, voice and mind and re-educating oneself;
Avoiding negative actions and increasing virtues;
Having shame and restraint and cultivating faith;
Following teachers and virtuous companions.
(These points) are very important for beginners. ⌘

These six points, being indispensable to those who aspire to approach the Buddha's teaching, must be acquired in their entirety.

1. CULTIVATING THE THREE TRAININGS, THE FOUNDATION OF THE PATH

The three trainings that constitute the foundation of the path concern the exercise of morality or shila, of contemplation or samadhi and of discriminating wisdom or prajña respectively. As these trainings are cited as the first of the six points that are indispensable to beginners clearly the other five points, starting from "studying without limits the various fields of knowledge", implicitly pertain to one or the other of

the three trainings because in reality there is no preliminary teaching that is not contained within them.

2. STUDYING WITHOUT LIMITS THE VARIOUS FIELDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct (sPyod 'jug; Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra) by Shantideva states (op. 17: p. 45, 5):

⌘ There is nothing that the offspring of the Victorious Ones (Bodhisattvas)
Do not learn,
There is nothing that does not produce merits
For the wise who act in accord with this principle. ⌘

The meaning of these verses is that by studying without limits according to one's capacities the various fields of knowledge necessary in the specific conditions of time and place, acquiring thereby those qualities which enable one to benefit the teachings and beings whether in a direct or indirect way, whatever is learned can become useful for producing merit. This corresponds in full with the descriptions of behaviour according to the teachings of the Secret Instructions or Mennagde of Dzogchen, which explain that in order for true knowledge to arise in oneself, with an attitude similar to that of a bee one should taste the flavours of all the various teachings without limits. However this is necessary only until the moment when, having tasted the real essence of the teaching one finally discovers the real condition. It would be senseless to think that one should spend one's whole life accumulating words, like a bee flying from one flower to another gathering nectar. *Light of the Eyes of Contemplation (bSam gtan mig sgron)* by Nubchen Sangye Yeshe states (op. 36: p. 13, 2):

⌘ The first thing to do is to engage only in study. In fact it is said that neglecting to develop prajña derived from study is like looking for gold in the dark without a lamp. So, just as to look for gold in the dark one needs a lamp, to seek the final goal through

the mind and also to meditate one needs the light of the lamp of words and letters. ⌘

And (op. 36: p. 14, 1):

⌘ *The Mirror of the Dharma (Chos kyi me long)* states:

Study does not refer to an ocean of words;
Supreme study means understanding also through a single word.

And the *Sutra of the Descent to Lanka* (*Laṅkāvatārasūtra*):

"Most learned"[15] is someone who has become expert in the true meaning and not the words. ⌘

So, in order to practise a teaching, whether it pertains to the sutras, tantras or Dzogchen, first of all it is necessary to eliminate the darkness of the mind by learning what to practise. Then by reflecting one must free oneself from the net of doubts with regard to the teaching one is following. This factor is indispensable in order to approach a path of realisation and to practise its preliminary teachings. In particular, to enter the supreme Dzogchen teaching, after having studied and reflected on everything that seems useful it is necessary to understand the characteristics related to essence, nature and specific aspects etc. that distinguish an uncommon path from a common path. Identifying the fundamental differences between them one will understand that the deep Ati path of self-liberation is very rare and that once encountered it will bring immense benefit. With this awareness and deep conviction one will finally enter into it: this is what is meant by "following a teaching with intelligence", the perfect way to approach a teaching, and this is precisely what is meant by studying without limits the various fields of knowledge.

[15] In Tibetan *mang du thos pa*, one who has listened or studied a lot. It should be borne in mind that, although *thos pa*, lit. 'listening', refers to the phase of engagement in listening to the teachers' teachings, reading and studying scriptures etc., in the present context it has nearly always been rendered 'study'

3. CALMING BODY, VOICE AND MIND AND RE-EDUCATING ONESELF

In order to ascertain whether a practitioner's three doors of body, voice and mind are calm, smooth and relaxed and whether or not their character has been re-educated, teachers repeat an adage that states:

The sign of having studied is a calm and controlled mind,
The sign of having meditated is the absence of passions.

In fact, in the same way that from seeing smoke one can infer that a fire has been lit, a person in whom genuine understanding of the practice has arisen and whose mind has integrated properly with the meaning of the teaching will certainly evince an attentive and mindful attitude as far as the body is concerned, a kind and inoffensive manner of speaking as far as the voice is concerned, and a mild, humble, present and relaxed character as far as the mind is concerned. If the converse occurs it is a sign that one's mind is not yet integrated with the teaching and that one's understanding of the teaching has remained at the intellectual level, related to something external. In such a case all one's will must be engaged in seeking to integrate one's mind with the teaching.

Thus success in calming one's body, voice and mind and in re-educating one's character depends on being able to integrate oneself with the meaning of the teaching, and this in its turn depends on whether or not one has become familiar with the preliminary practices known as 'mind trainings'. For this reason, just as music is necessary in order to dance, to enter the path of the supreme teaching it is very important first of all to engage diligently in the series of mind trainings.

3.1. The four awarenesses that change one's mental attitude

In general it is deemed necessary, before undertaking any of these practices, to train one's mind by reflecting on the four awarenesses that change one's mental attitude, that are: the precious human body, impermanence, karma, and the suffering of samsara.

3.1.1. The precious human body

The first awareness regards the difficulty of obtaining a free human body with all qualities and the great opportunity it presents, as stated by Shantideva (op. 17: p. 3, 12):

⌘ This free and endowed condition is very difficult to obtain,
And since it can enable one to realise the true aim,
If one does not benefit from it now
Will it ever recur in future? ⌘

3.1.2. Impermanence

Even though we have succeeded in obtaining a precious human body, so difficult to obtain, it is impermanent and changes every moment. Concerning the transience of human life, in particular, Buddha said (in the *Lalitavistarasūtra*):

The three worlds are impermanent as clouds in autumn,
The birth and death of beings are like a show,
Human life lasts as long as a lightning flash
And passes as swiftly as a cascade down a steep mountain.

3.1.3. Karma

Even though our body, being impermanent, is destined to perish, nothing finishes at death because we are compelled to undergo the effects of all the actions accumulated in the course of several lives. Buddha said (in *Rajāvavādakasūtra*):

When a king's time has come to leave this world,
His riches do not follow him, nor do his relatives or friends.
Wherever one is and wherever one goes
Karma follows like one's shadow.

3.1.4. The suffering of samsara

Due to the power of karma produced by negative actions we inevitably encounter boundless suffering in infinite samsara. Buddha said (in *Lalitavistarasūtra*):

Due to craving, becoming[16] and ignorance
Beings transmigrate in unawareness among the five classes of existence,
That is, among humans, Devas and the three lower states,
Just like the turning of a potter's wheel.

Usually these four awarenesses are analysed intellectually, hence there are many explanations of their respective natures, etymology, characteristics and subdivisions, such as the eight unfavourable and ten favourable conditions that form the eighteen qualities of the 'precious human body'[17]. However their conclusion, the point that is indispensable to one's practice, is that we are human beings able to talk and to reason, thus far superior to animals that have little intelligence. We have had the good fortune to meet the supreme teaching that can liberate from the six lokas[18], to be in contact with a teacher able to transmit

[16] 'Becoming' (*srid pa*), one of the twelve links of interdependence, means the possibility of forming a new form of existence conditioned by *karma*. Also see note 120.

[17] The eighteen conditions of freedom and completeness (*dal 'byor bco brgyad*) are the eight conditions of freedom from birth in the three lower states: as 1. a hell being, 2. Preta, 3. animal, or 4. as a long-living Deva, 5. in a barbarous place, 6. in a place dominated by a wrong view, 7. in a place where Buddha's teaching does not exist, 8. dumb or stupid, and the ten conditions of completeness, subdivided in five self-dependent conditions: 1. having obtained a human body, 2. being born in a place where the teaching exists, 3. having all one's senses functioning, enabling study and reflection, 4. not being a slave to extremely negative actions, 5. having faith in and respect for the teachings; and five conditions depending on external factors: 6. the fact that a Buddha has appeared in the world; 7. that the Buddha has taught the Dharma; 8. that the Dharma still exists; 9. that there is the possibility to enter the Dharma; 10. that there is a teacher showing the path of liberation. (O.N.)

[18] The dimensions of the six classes of beings: of Devas, Asuras and humans (the 'higher states'), and of animals, Pretas and hell beings (the 'lower states'). (O.N.). See notes 21 and 22.

it correctly, and to have all the favourable secondary causes. Without wasting such a great opportunity, formulating the thought: "I will do everything to liberate myself and all sentient beings from the immense ocean of suffering of infinite samsara!" we must always keep alive the presence of this awareness.

If these essential points of the practice, tied to concrete experience that enable stable understanding to arise within, are lacking then being expert in the eighteen qualities of the precious human body and so on will not serve to free us from samsara. So, practitioners must engage diligently in order to be able always to keep alive the presence of the essential points of the four awarenesses.

3.2. The seven special mind trainings

Among all the series of mind trainings used as basic practices in Ati Dzogpa Chenpo the 'seven mind trainings' belonging to the texts of *Dzogchen Nyingthig*[19] are distinguished because they are easier for beginners to apply than those of other systems and at the same time are also more effective. These are:

1. Training the mind in the thought that everything compounded is impermanent.
2. Training the mind in the thought that all actions are the cause of suffering.
3. Training the mind in the thought of how we are beguiled by diverse secondary causes.
4. Training the mind in the thought that all the actions of this life are meaningless.
5 Training the mind by reflecting on the fruit of supreme liberation.
6. Training the mind by reflecting on the value of the teachings of one's teacher.
7. Training the mind by means of meditative stability of the state beyond thought.

[19] The term *snying thig* or 'heart essence' designates a vast literature of Dzogchen teachings belonging to the Man ngag or Upadeśa series.

Whoever practises these seven trainings will easily succeed, first of all to enter the deep and swift path of Atiyoga, then to put into practice without difficulty its fundamental points, and finally to integrate their mind with the teaching. Thanks to their qualities and special functions, all Atiyoga teachers in recent times are accustomed to usher beginners into the Ati teaching through the practice of these seven trainings.

3.2.1. Training the mind in the thought that everything compounded is impermanent

In the *Three Sections of the Letters of the Five Spaces (Klong lnga'i yi ge dum bu gsum pa)* it is written that (op. 3: p. 6, 6):

⌘ Everything compounded is impermanent, like a water bubble. ⌘

Thus the outer world and all the beings inhabiting it are impermanent. So we should train our mind diligently reflecting on the four characteristic aspects of impermanence: the certainty of death, the fact that it is impossible to know when it will happen, the great variety of circumstances in which it can happen, the futility of all worldly deeds.

In *The Stairway to Liberation (Thar pa'i them skas)* Jigmed Lingpa says (op. 13: p. 135, 4):

⌘ It is only thanks to the power of an exceptional number of good actions accumulated in past lives that we have obtained this precious human body, difficult to procure in terms of example, quantity and essence[20], and it is a great opportunity. Reflecting on this, as adventitious secondary causes are infinite what are we to do if we die tonight and in our bed tomorrow there is

[20] The traditional example (*dpe*) is of a water turtle emerging from the water every hundred years randomly putting its head through a yoke floating on the ocean: obtaining a human birth is even more difficult. Quantity (*grangs*) refers to the greater number of other kinds of beings, such as insects, compared to human beings. Essence (*ngo bo*) refers basically to the cause of rebirth as a human being, which consists in pure morality.

only a corpse? People who ignore the real condition without a thought about the possibility of dying pass their lives pursuing their (karmic) vision and in this way they reach the moment of death. Others, even though aware that they will die, hope to have a long time before their old age and so through rites and other expedients seek only to improve their condition and to eliminate worries, wasting their time in the sole interests of this life. ⌘

And (op. 13: p. 137, 6):

⌘ Now we are in a degenerate era, and even if we succeed in living long enough with twenty-one thousand breaths life becomes one day shorter, with thirty of these days a month passes, and with twelve months a year, so it does not take long for a life to end, as is written in the *Lalitavistarasūtra*:

The three worlds are impermanent as clouds in autumn,
The birth and death of beings are like a show,
Human life lasts as long as a lightning flash
And passes as swiftly as a cascade down a steep mountain.

So, reflecting well that there is no guarantee that one can prolong one's life even by an instant, one must seek to discern the essence with the same fervour as someone whose head has caught fire. ⌘

3.2.2. Training the mind in the thought that all actions are the cause of suffering

From the *Three Sections of the Letters of the Five Spaces* (op. 3: p. 6, 6):

⌘ All the happiness of samsara, even if it momentarily appears as such, is in reality only suffering, ripening in the same way as a poisonous fruit. ⌘

In fact, even though it may seem that at times in the karmic dimension of samsara there is fleeting happiness, in reality beings of the three lower states[21] are afflicted with the 'suffering of suffering' or 'double suffering', like a leper who is also struck by bubonic plague; the beings of the three higher states[22] are tormented by the 'suffering of change', like a bee trapped in a jar[23]; and all beings dominated by a distorted

[21] The three lower states:
A. The eighteen hell realms, subdivided in eight hot hells: 1. that revives, 2. with black lines, 3. that crushes, 4. that makes weep, 5. that makes weep very much, 6. flaming, 7. intensely flaming, 8. without respite (*avīci*); and eight cold hells: 9. that blisters, 10. that bursts blisters, 11. of the lament 'achu', 12. of the groaning lament 'kyihu', 13. teeth-chattering, 14. that makes one crack like an *utpāla* flower, 15. that makes one crack like a lotus, 16. that makes one crack like a large lotus; plus 17. the neighbouring hells, 18. the ephemeral hells.
B. The Pretas are subdivided in three categories: 1. with outer hindrances, 2. with inner hindrances, 3. hindered in terms of food and drink (or inner and outer); or in four categories, adding those 4. with common hindrances.
C. Animals are subdivided mainly in two great categories: 1. those roaming the earth and 2. those living in the sea, each containing many subdivisions. (O.N.)

[22] The three higher states:
A. The Devas can belong to the formless realm, the form realm and the passion realm. The Devas of the formless realm, endowed with consciousness only and without a physical body, belong to the four spheres of absorption (*skye mched mu bzhi*): 1. infinite space, 2. infinite consciousness, 3. nothingness, 4. neither being nor non-being or neither perception nor non-perception, also called 'the peak of existence'.
The Devas of the form realm are subdivided in seventeen classes, consisting of the five pure dimensions: 1. subtle, 2. painless, 3. attractive, 4. supreme vision, 5. excellent (*akaniṣṭha*), and the twelve abodes of the the four levels of *dhyāna* or meditative absorption. The first *dhyāna* level comprises three Deva realms: 1. Brahma, 2. Officiant Brahma, 3. Great Brahma; the second level: 4. little light, 5. unlimited light, 6. clear light; the third level: 7. little virtue, 8. unlimited virtue, 9. extensive virtue; the fourth level: 10. cloudless (light), 11. increase of merit, 12. great fruit.
In the passion realm there are six classes of Devas, in turn subdivided in four classes residing in space: 13. free of conflict, 14. joyous (*tuṣita*), 15. that delight in emanating, 16. adept in transformation, and two classes living on earth: 17. the four great kings, 18. the thirty-three.
B. The Asuras are subdivided in five categories: Deva-type, Yakṣa-type, Mārā-type, Rākṣasa-type and Nāga-type.
C. Human beings comprise the whole of humanity living in the four or five great continents. (O.N.)

[23] The suffering of change refers to the changeable nature of all earthly happiness: like a bee trapped in a jar any happiness beings might experience is undergone within the prison of *saṁsāra*.

perception of reality are subject to 'all-pervading conditioning suffering', transmigrating infinitely like the turning of the paddles of a water mill. Reflecting on all of this, diligently train your mind.

In *The Stairway to Liberation* Jigmed Lingpa says (op. 13: p. 142, 3):

⌘ All our happiness and suffering, good and bad aspects and positive and negative things depend solely on karma. Nevertheless all the deeds of our life are directed to defeating enemies and helping friends, to business and trade, to gain and honour, to attachment, hatred and anger, and furthermore to advising dear ones, to becoming famous, important etc. Actually, nothing we do deserves our trust and care. For example, if with great effort we succeed in accumulating precious objects in reality it is as if we were toiling only to satisfy the craving of thieves and enemies. Even if we try to enjoy delicious food and drink, they can become the cause of sickness and bring about death. Even though we hold dear our friends and relatives, believing they do us well, at times they can become real enemies. Even without intending directly to harm someone at times without reason we criticise and deride them, vilifying and mocking them so as to vex their mind. So, all these things are of the nature of suffering and do nothing but increase it, and it is my great shortcoming not to have understood it until now. Now, on reflection I understand that all the actions I committed until yesterday are only a memory and have no aftermath, so they are like last night's dream. What is happening to me today will be tonight's dream and everything I will do tomorrow will be tomorrow night's dream, because nothing stable exists. But in spite of this, being conditioned by futile attachment we do nothing but pass time in attitudes of love and hate, of struggle, judging things good and bad, accumulating riches, seeking pleasure and avoiding pain and holding on to our ideas: in this way it is as if we are nothing but an accumulation of defects. So I regret having deemed worldly appearances, that are delusive and illusory, to be stable and permanent. From now on, without worrying about the future I will seek to recognise attachment to my ego as a defect. You must think thus with sincerity. ⌘

And further (op. 13: p. 199, 6):

⌘ Not knowing what to accept and what to reject, even though we crave happiness we obtain only sorrow, like a moth that, attracted by a flame dives into it and is burnt alive; or like a bee that, due to its attachment to nectar, sucks a flower and cannot disengage from it, dying trapped inside; or like a deer killed by hunters while it listens to the sound of the flute; like fish that, attached to the taste of the food on the fisherman's hook, die on the hot sand; like an elephant that, craving contact with something cool, goes into a muddy pool and dies because it cannot get out[24]. In fact the *Treasury of the Dohas (Do ha mdzod)* says:

Observe the deeds of the fish, the moth, the elephant, the bee and the deer! ⌘

3.2.3. Training the mind in the thought of how we are beguiled by diverse secondary causes

From the *Three Sections of the Letters of the Five Spaces* (op. 3: p. 7, 1):

⌘ There is no end to all the various secondary causes, just like following the mirage of a spring of water. ⌘

In fact all the beings that transmigrate through the power of karma, whether they are born in the higher or lower states, are in fact beguiled and dominated by the diverse secondary causes so whatever actions they perform become a cause of suffering. They are never content with what they do and there is nothing on which they can really rely. Reflecting on all this train your mind with diligence.

[24] The five animals symbolise attachment to the five sense objects: form, smell, sound, taste and touchable things.

3.2.4. Training the mind in the thought that all the actions of this life are meaningless

From the *Three Sections of the Letters of the Five Spaces* (op. 3: p. 6, 6):

> ⌘ All the actions of this life are totally without meaning, like the good or bad dreams during a single sleep. ⌘

Everything we do in life is based on an attitude of partiality, exemplified by our wanting to defeat our enemies and conversely to help our friends and dear ones. But even if we strive a great deal and try to adapt to worldly conditions to achieve fame, honour and riches, in reality any action of our body, voice and mind is conditioned by the dualism of attachment and hatred. Thus we feel jealous of those superior to us, proud towards those inferior to us and competitive with our equals. But what is the use of struggling so much for things without meaning which only distract us? It is better to engage in meaningful actions that have a real purpose. Mindful of this, train your mind with diligence.

3.2.5. Training the mind by reflecting on the fruit of supreme liberation

From the *Three Sections of the Letters of the Five Spaces* (op. 3: p. 7, 2):

> ⌘ The fruit of supreme liberation is to not fall again into suffering, like a person cured forever of smallpox. ⌘

The compassionate Buddha, expert in methods and aware of the diversity of conditions, capacities and attitudes of people, transmitted various ways of liberation congruent with them. Understanding that they are all infallible ways to end the dualism of birth and death, train your mind well in this awareness.

Jigmed Linga said in *The Stairway to Liberation* (op. 13: p. 171, 3):

⌘ One might think that all the suffering of the lower states and of the six lokas could be assuaged by virtue of the power of the Enlightened Ones whence there would be no problem, but this is not the case. In *The Discourses on Vinaya ('Dul ba lung)* Buddha is reported to have said:

I teach you the way to liberation,
But liberation depends on you: carry on with diligence!

In fact, precisely because we are ignorant of what to do and what to avoid Buddha taught the way of liberation in diverse ways. However just as it is not possible to stop the dream of someone deep in sleep, liberation from samsara and the lower states of existence depends solely on your own effort. Were it not so already millions of years ago the rays of compassion of a single Enlightened One would have sufficed to empty samsara. ⌘

3.2.6. Training the mind by reflecting on the value of the teachings of one's teacher

From the *Three Sections of the Letters of the Five Spaces* (op. 3: p. 7, 3):

⌘ The teachings of a supreme teacher are the way leading to the supreme abode of liberation, like a good staircase. ⌘

Having found a supreme teacher, holder of the essence of the secret instructions, you should follow him or her in the right way through the 'three ways of satisfying': by the practice of meditation, with one's body, and by satisfying him or her with material offerings. Then request the deep teachings, receiving them in a serious manner, not superficially, recognising what the teacher transmits as the supreme path to attain liberation. Feeling devotion and stable faith derived from certainty deep in your heart, train your mind in this awareness.

In *The Stairway to Liberation* Jigmed Lingpa says (op. 13: p. 174, 6):

⌘ We have become cognisant that within whichever of the six classes of beings one transmigrates one undergoes only suffering and there is never a moment of happiness, not even a split second. But even though we are aware of this, we do not liberate ourselves from suffering only by means of pessimism, we have to engage in something that can truly benefit us. In what? The *Rajāvavādakasūtra* says:

Great King! At that point, in such a situation only the supreme Dharma can save or protect us, nothing else! In that moment the supreme Dharma is release, protection, support, a place of refuge, a helping friend.

In this case it is not a matter of just reading a book but rather, just as butter comes from milk and smoke from fire, the base of the path consists solely in confiding in a virtuous teacher to find the essence (of the path). *The Compendium (sDud pa)* states:

One must always follow wise teachers. Why? Because they are the source of the qualities possessed by the wise. Just as the sick trust a doctor in order to get well without being distracted one should follow a virtuous teacher. ⌘

3.2.7. Training the mind by means of meditative stability in the state beyond thought

From the *Three Sections of the Letters of the Five Spaces* (op. 3: p. 7, 3):

⌘ The meditative stability[25] of the state completely beyond

[25] The Tibetan term *bsam gtan* translates the Sanskrit *dhyāna* and at times also *samādhi*, the latter generally rendered *ting nge 'dzin* in Tibetan. In the author's words: "*bSam gtan* refers to a condition of recollection in which one concentrates totally on the 'calm' aspect of the mind, such as in the practice of *zhi gnas*, whereas (in Dzog-

thought is the base whence all contemplations arise, just like a well tended field. ⌘

And in *The Stairway to Liberation* Jigmed Lingpa says (op. 13: 214, 5)

⌘ Training the mind by means of meditative stability in the state beyond thought is a supreme method in order to start on the path of contemplation. *The Sphere of Liberation (Grol ba'i thig le)* states:

Breathing in the upper prana one subdues vision,
Breathing up the lower prana one subdues emptiness,
Holding and turning the central prana one achieves their union.

In fact, for beings vision is something outside while rigpa is inside; in between there is the karmic breath that is like the mind's mount. In this way, falling into the dualism of subject and object, beings subject to delusion transmigrate infinitely. However the swift and deep way of Vajrayana has methods that, by controlling the activity of the karmic prana tied to inhalation and exhalation, directly[26] enable one to recognise the wisdom of the natural state without relying on the methods of meditative stability that entail lengthy training using reasoning and the net of concepts, like in the lower vehicles. ⌘

To this end there exist three types of practice:

1. Training in the state beyond thought by means of pleasure and emptiness.
2. Training in the state beyond thought by means of clarity and emptiness.
3. Training in ultimate nature of phenomena completely beyond thought.

chen) *ting nge 'dzin* means abiding in the state of pure instantaneous presence or *rig pa* completely beyond the mind" (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu).

[26] In Tibetan *btsan thabs su*, that can also be rendered as 'forcedly' or 'independently of one's will'.

3.2.7.1. Training in the state beyond thought by means of pleasure and emptiness

Concerning the way to apply the first of the three trainings, in *Stairway to Liberation* Jigmed Lingpa states (op. 13: p. 215, 3):

⌘ After having taken up the meditation posture with seven characteristics[27] visualise your own body as completely empty inside like an inflated balloon and, at its centre, the central channel, mindful of its four qualities:
- Straight like the stem of a plantain.
- Slender as a lotus petal.
- Blue as a cloudless sky.
- Luminous as a sesame oil lamp.

At its top, which corresponds to the top of the head, concentrate on a white letter HAM; at its bottom, below the navel, concentrate on a red letter A[28]. Practising the 'four applications of breathing'[29] push the force of the upper prana downwards and pull the force of the lower prana upwards, visualising at the same time that the letter A (below) the navel kindles a fire which gradually rises until it reaches the letter HAM at the top of your head. At this point imagine that the HAM melts, and from it a flow of nectar pours filling the four main chakras[30] and all the secondary channels, causing the wisdom of (the union of) pleasure and emptiness to arise.

[27] The seven characteristics of the meditation posture (*bsam gtan gyi chos bdun*) match the seven characteristics of the Vairocana posture: 1. legs crossed, 2. hands on the knees, 3. tongue touching the palate, 4. eyes, lips and teeth naturally relaxed, 5. spine straight as an arrow, 6. chest and shoulders open, 7. the whole body relaxed and controlled at the same time. (O.N.)

[28] Actually one visualises the *a shad*, that is the final part of the Tibetan letter A, shaped like a triangle. The triangle, that represents fire, should be visualised pointing upwards.

[29] *sByor ba bzhi ldan*: in this case the four phases of inhalation (*rngub pa*), retention (*dgang ba*), guiding the *prāṇa* force by pressure (*gzhil ba*), exhalation (*'phen pa*).

[30] The four main *cakras* are: the *cakra* of total bliss at the top of the head, the *cakra* of enjoyment at the throat, the *cakra* of *dharma* at the heart, the *cakra* of emanation at the navel. (O.N.).

Concentrate (at the end) on a white letter A at your heart: focusing on it without letting yourself be distracted by thoughts, by means of the method of pleasure the wisdom of recognition of emptiness, prajña, will arise. Until you have acquired sufficient familiarity with this practice train in short but frequent sessions. ⌘

You must engage in this manner with diligence. Even though in reality to master this fundamental method perfectly it takes months or years of assiduous practice, needless to say to get at least some experience it is necessary to commit at least one week to it.

3.2.7.2. Training in the state beyond thought by means of clarity and emptiness

In *The Stairway to Liberation* Jigmed Lingpa says (op. 13: p. 216, 2):

⌘ Expel the impure breath three[31] or nine times, in order to eliminate the impurities of the pranas of the elements. Then inhale air imagining that all outer vision, which we normally consider material, dissolves into light, merging with the azure blue of the sky, and that this blue penetrates our body. Concentrating that every part of your body is pervaded with this blue push the force of prana vigorously downwards and pull up a little the force of the lower prana in such a way as to join together (the two forces). Practising like this the experience of clarity and emptiness will arise.
Furthermore, the glorious Samyepa[32] said:
If your condition is excessively cold, meditate imagining the air as a hot current; if conversely your condition is excessively hot, visualise it as cool to the touch. This is very useful. ⌘

[31] *rLung ro lan gsum*: the last three of the nine exhalations of impure breath done at the beginning of a session. (O.N.)

[32] bSam yas pa: bSam yas is the famous monastery built in central Tibet by Śāntarakṣita, King Khri srong Lde'u btsan and Padmasambhava in the eighth century. As he lived there for quite a long time Klong chen pa also came to be known as bSam yas pa, 'of bSam yas'. (O.N.)

You must train well in all this. In this case, too, needless to say, in order to get at least some experience practitioners should fervently devote at least seven days to this fundamental method.

3.2.7.3. Training in the ultimate nature of phenomena completely beyond thought

From *The Stairway to Liberation* by Jigmed Lingpa (op. 13: p. 218, 1):

⌘ With body and mind relaxed remain without moving your eyes, thereby finding yourself in a state beyond the concepts that arise from discursive thought. Without applying any particular effort with regard to the breathing, remain directly filled with the force of the 'central prana'[33]; this is an extremely profound upadesha. In fact, it is said (by Padmasambhava) in *Precious Necklace of Advice (Zhal gdams nor bu'i phreng ba)*:

Listen Tsogyal! Sitting in the lotus position, breathe in the lower prana lightly (upwards) and push the higher prana lightly downwards and remain filled with the central prana at the navel level: due to its benefits this is the pranayama that keeps wisdom in its natural condition. In fact, it facilitates practice, both when engaging in the transformation method of the creation stage and when meditating on the 'clear natural light' of the mind (in the completion stage) and so on[34]. This pranayama automati-

[33] *Bar rlung thad kar rgyangs*: in this context the term *bar rlung* denotes only having actually experienced the sensation felt during retention of *kumbhaka* and not the requirement to apply a specific retention in *kumbhaka*. However, as in order to apperceive the sensation of *kumbhaka* in *bar rlung* it is necessary to have the experience derived from having previously engaged in *kumbhaka* practice, practitioners must train and progress in the necessary gradual manner. (O.N.)

[34] The creation or development stage (*bskyed rim*) and the completion stage (*rdzogs rim*) are the two fundamental phases of tantric practice. During the first stage one gradually visualises the deity and its *maṇḍala*, mentally 'creating' the pure dimension with the aid of *mantras*, *mudrās* or gestures, and concentration. The second stage mainly concerns the dissolution of the visualised form into the emptiness of the nature of mind, employing numerous techniques of breath control and of visualisation of *cakras* and channels.

cally enables you to complete any of the three phases of 'maintaining, guiding, and spreading' the seed-essence (*thig le*)[35]. This pranayama automatically purifies all dualistic concepts related to subject and object; it liberates (the pure presence of) rigpa from the defects of torpor, obfuscation and agitation. It prevents disturbances of the eyesight and of the other senses and immunises against illnesses caused by phlegm and bile. It eliminates swelling of (and excessive gas from) the belly, subdues epidemics and infectious diseases, prevents infestations of lice (and other parasites) and ensures a life as long as the sun and moon. So, visualising your body as the Yidam deity, staying perfectly straight, push the force of prana below the navel and then remain filled, relaxing your gaze fixed in space and leaving your consciousness in the condition of the emptiness of original purity. This is called 'the pranayama of total wisdom' and also 'the pranayama that separates (the pure presence of) rigpa from the mind'.

When you apply this pranayama you should pull in your sides slightly and remain filled at the level of the navel[36]: whether inhaling or holding, in any phase of breathing you must hold this 'fullness'. If you engage in this with great zeal and precision the upper and lower pranas will automatically be attracted.

Always holding this 'fullness' at the level of the navel aids presence. If you visualise yourself as a Yidam deity, do so holding this 'fullness' at the level of the navel. If you recite mantras,

[35] According to tantric physiology, essentially the human body is composed of three elements: the subtle channels, the *prāṇa* flowing therein, and the seed-essence or *thig le*. The *thig le* represents the essential force of the physical body and underpins all the practices that involve the principle of the *kuṇḍalinī* energy.

[36] *Thad nyeg byas* means that one has to pull in one's sides at the height of the navel, otherwise it is not possible to obtain properly the result expressed in the phrase *lte ba thad kar rgyangs*, "remaining filled at the height of the navel". This phrase, in fact, does not mean that one has to fill the navel thereby stretching the stomach forwards, because this produces only serious disturbances and illness instead of benefits. Here one automatically obtains "remaining filled at the height of the navel" simply by pulling in one's sides somewhat. If this does not occur one should consult teachers or other experts and learn it properly. (O.N.)

do so holding this 'fullness' at the level of the navel. If you meditate on wisdom totally beyond thought of the ultimate nature of phenomena (*dharmatā*), do so holding this 'fullness' at the level of the navel. Walking or moving, lying down or sitting, whichever of the four body activities you perform do it so as never to separate yourself from this secret and total wisdom.

As stated (by Padmasambhava), you must understand that the 'central prana' is not applied only during the mind trainings, rather it constitutes an important and very helpful method to use as the base of any way to accomplish enlightenment.
So, training your mind through the three methods (in order to find) the 'state completely beyond thought' you will acquire the capacity to direct your mind to anything and will succeed gradually in prolonging the experience of a state free of thoughts, like space: signs of perfecting that will manifest according to your capacities. ⌘

Thus, you must engage in training on the basis of these clear, comprehensive explanations. However, to enable the experience of the 'central prana' to arise it is necessary first of all to engage with diligence in the practice of the Pranayama of the Profound Four Applications in order to master kumbhaka as explained in the *Union of Sun and Moon Yantra ('Phrul 'khor nyi zla kha sbyor)* (op. 20, A: p. 6, 5; B: p. 5, 5):

⌘ The Pranayama of the Profound Four Applications is the method for mastering kumbhaka. The posture is the Vairochana position with seven characteristics. With your right hand touch your left knee, then your right knee, then your chest and snap your fingers. Concentrate on closely attending to the flow of breath. The breathing method is (based on) cycles of four (beats): from four beats respectively for the inhalation, closed hold and exhalation together with the empty hold (you arrive at) a cycle (of four) for the inhalation, six beats for the closed hold and a cycle (of four) for the exhalation and the empty hold. Then the inhalation stays at one cycle while the closed hold increases to

two cycles, etc., i.e. until the closed hold becomes double the exhalation and the empty hold, it increases by two each time, while the duration of the exhalation must be same as the empty hold. When the closed hold becomes double the exhalation and the empty hold, both the hold and the exhalation plus the empty hold last six beats. Then you progress by increasing the hold to twice the inhalation, then to two and a half cycles, etc. until the exhalation plus the empty hold becomes double the inhalation. The inhalation then becomes one and a half cycles and gradually the inhalation lasts two cycles, the hold eight cycles and the exhalation plus the empty hold, four cycles: completing this is the 'minor kumbhaka' duration (32 beats). An exhalation plus empty hold of six cycles is the 'medium kumbhaka' (48 beats), and of thirty-two beats, the 'major kumbhaka' (64 beats). ⌘

Thus the best thing for practitioners is to succeed in mastering the major kumbhaka, otherwise it is necessary to reach at least the minor kumbhaka level, and only on this basis to practise the 'central prana'.

In conclusion, it is very important for Santi Maha Sangha practitioners to engage with diligence in the essential instructions of the Seven Mind Trainings in order actually to experience them.

4. AVOIDING NEGATIVE ACTIONS AND INCREASING VIRTUES: TRAINING IN MORALITY

4.1. The meaning of 'negative action'

Digpa, the Tibetan term rendered here as 'negative action', literally means 'threat' or 'hindrance'. In fact a person enslaved by the emotions due to karma or to dualistic vision can, through improper behaviour of body, voice and mind perform many bad deeds whose accumulated causes become a force capable of 'threatening' to interrupt or to hinder the path to liberation.

Since basically the primary causes of such 'negative actions' consist in being conditioned by the emotions and carrying out non-virtuous actions with body, voice and mind, practitioners must take special care to avoid any kind of negative action, of greater or lesser gravity, by always maintaining presence and awareness. To this end it is indispensable to identify which types of action can produce negativity.

In general a negative or non-virtuous action is deemed to be any deed performed by the body, voice or mind aimed at harming directly or indirectly one's own or another being's body, voice or mind. However, going into details we may note that at times a deed deemed virtuous by some people is considered in the opposite way by others and vice-versa. This means that it is very difficult to establish a clear demarcation between 'virtuous actions' and 'non-virtuous actions'. In any case, on the basis of the common viewpoint the omniscient Buddha Shakyamuni identified the following as the gravest of the negative actions: the ten non-virtuous actions, the five actions with immediate result, the five actions 'near' to the five preceding ones in terms of gravity, the four heavy actions, the eight contrary actions.

4.2. The ten non-virtuous actions

The ten non-virtuous actions include three actions related to the body:

1. Killing.
2. Stealing.
3. Sexual misconduct[37]

Four actions related to the voice:

4. Lying.
5. Slandering.
6. Insulting.
7. Speaking in vain.

[37] In the case of ordained persons this means indulging in sexual intercourse and in the case of lay persons indulging in non-virtuous sexual conduct.

Three actions related to the mind:

8. Craving other people's property.
9. Malevolence.
10. Upholding an erroneous view[38].

4.3. The way a negative karma is accumulated[39]

Regarding the way a negative karma is accumulated, let's take the example of taking life. In the first place one would have to have in mind precisely who one wants to kill, and then have the precise intention to do it. Then it would be necessary to carry out the actual act itself; lastly the person in question must be dead: all four of these factors must be present. Or, according to another way of assessment, the necessary conditions are only three: the intention to kill, the act itself, and satisfaction at having killed. Even though there are these two different interpretations there is no difference in the fact that in this way a negative karma is certainly produced.

4.4. The two types of negative action

Negative actions, in any case, can be of two types: carried out and accumulated or not carried out but accumulated anyway. In the former type one intends to harm somebody, carries it out and is satisfied by it, whereas in the latter type one orders someone to do the murder and is satisfied by it. This can be applied to any other negative action.

4.5. The five actions with immediate result

The five actions with immediate result (literally 'without interval') are so called because at the time of death they cause rebirth directly in

[38] Basically, this means not believing in the law of cause and effect of *karma*.

[39] This section is based mainly on *Thar lam gsal sgron* by A 'dzam 'Brug pa (op. 12: pp. 81ff.)

the lower states without the interval of the intermediate state or bardo. These are:

1. Killing one's father.
2. Killing one's mother.
3. Killing an Arhat (or a realised being).
4. Causing the body of a Tathagata to bleed with malicious intent.
5. Sowing discord within the Sangha.

4.6. The five near actions

The five actions 'near' to those with immediate result are:

1. Killing a Bodhisattva, near in gravity to killing one's father.
2. Raping a nun thereby causing the violation of her vow, near to killing one's mother.
3. Killing a practitioner on the path of liberation, near to killing an Arhat.
4. Destroying stupas and other objects of worship, near to causing the body of a Tathagata bleed.
5. Illegally expropriating the income of the Sangha, near to sowing discord within it.

4.7. The four heavy actions

The four heavy actions are in their turn subdivided into four categories of four each: heavy actions concerning being revered, such as receiving a particular type of respect where it is not proper; heavy actions concerning violations, such as not keeping one's pledge with someone; heavy actions concerning blaming, such as censuring while prey to anger someone worthy of hallowed respect; heavy actions which contrast, such as maintaining an utterly wrong attitude[40].

[40] The sixteen heavy actions, subdivided in four categories each, are:
The four heavy actions that involve being revered: 1. being revered by taking the place

4.8. The eight contrary actions

The eight contrary actions are:

1. Denigrating virtuous actions.
2. Praising evil actions.
3. Disturbing a virtuous person's consciousness.
4. Causing the interruption of the accumulation of merit by someone full of faith.
5. Repudiating one's master.
6. Repudiating one's (Yidam) deity[41]
7. Repudiating one's spiritual brothers and sisters.
8. Violating the commitment (samaya) made in the presence of the sacred mandala[42].

Thus these eight actions too should be counted among the negative actions that cause hindrances.

of sages, 2. receiving reverence from a monk, 3. receiving reverence from a great practitioner, 4. receiving reverence and gifts from tantric practitioners. However this does not include cases where this occurs in spite of one's own wishes or where one is motivated by dire necessity.
The four heavy actions that involve transgression: 5. not keeping a pledge, 6. breaking the vows of the Śrāvaka vehicle, 7. transgressing the commitment of the training of the Bodhisattva vehicle, 8. violating the *samaya* (promise) of Tantra.
The four heavy actions that involve censuring: 9. finding fault with a realised being due to ignorance, 10. denigrating a truth due to pride, 11. discrediting one's companions' good qualities due to jealousy, 12. discarding a deity and taking another one due to sectarianism.
The four heavy actions which contrast: 13. ostentatiously exalting the sense of supreme equality (i.e., conceptualising the absolute), 14. actions that contrast with the sense of the real condition, 15. creating or provoking the secondary causes that bring about consummation of the five 'immediate' actions, 16. upholding a mistaken notion about the ten non-virtuous actions, i.e. considering them positive. (O.N.)

[41] I.e., breaking one's commitment to practise the *sādhana* of the *yi dam.*

[42] Waiving *samaya* taken during an initiation.

4.9. The results of negative actions

The results of negative actions can be of four types: the result of complete ripening, the result that corresponds to the cause; the conditioning result; the result that produces the individual's activity[43].

The result of complete ripening causes suffering in one or other of the three lower states in accord with the emotion accumulated in the greatest amount: the accumulation of anger produces the hell karmic vision, the accumulation of attachment produces the Preta karmic vision and the accumulation of ignorance produces the animal karmic vision.

The result that corresponds to the cause is experienced on being released from the result of complete ripening and being reborn in another form of existence. It has two types: the result that corresponds to the cause in action and the result that corresponds to the cause in experience.

The result that corresponds to the cause in action means that, on account of the habit of performing a certain negative action one is reborn with the predisposition to commit it again, thereby accumulating further karma. To take killing as an example, if one is reborn as a human being then from infancy one will find pleasure in killing and be skilled in committing this kind of bad deed, whereas in the animal realm one will be reborn as a hawk, a wolf or other predator.

The result that corresponds to the cause in experience, on the other hand, means experiencing the same kind of suffering that ensues from the previously accumulated negative action. For example, this could cause a person to die stillborn and this could repeat itself in several lives, or to die very young in most lives. At times, for example, when parents suffer very much over the death of a child this is due to a karmic debt owed for having killed in previous lives. In the same way, when a person is afflicted with various illnesses since infancy, and despite trying diverse cures throughout their life never finds respite, this is said to be due to having tortured animals in previous lives.

[43] In Tibetan *rnam smin gyi 'bras bu, rgyu mthun gyi 'bras bu, dbang gi 'bras bu, skyes bu byed pa'i 'bras bu* respectively.

The conditioning result determines the environment of rebirth, such as an arid and unpleasant zone or a place where life is always in danger due to deep ravines, cliffs and so on.

The result that produces the individual's activity consists in increasing the same type of negative action one has become accustomed to in previous lives so as to produce infinite suffering for many lives and to increase the negative action more and more, transmigrating in infinite samsara.

4.10. The way to develop virtuous actions

There are various kinds of positive actions. One type consists in avoiding committing negative actions as in this way automatically virtuous actions are accumulated: for example, by relinquishing killing one eschews the negative karma accumulated by taking life.

Another type consists in engaging in the virtuous actions converse to the non-virtuous ones: for example, instead of killing, to save and redeem life; instead of stealing, to give; instead of indulging in wanton sexual misconduct, to observe morality; instead of lying, to tell the truth; instead of slandering, to pacify discord; instead of insulting, to talk kindly; instead of chattering in vain, to talk meaningfully; instead of craving other people's property, to develop contentedness; instead of malevolence, to develop love and kindness; instead of upholding wrong ideas, to base one's consciousness on views that correspond to reality.

Finally, if a practitioner always has self-control with pure intention or the motivation to benefit others then any action performed with body, voice or mind can become virtuous. Thus virtuous actions, too, can be of different categories.

4.11. The result of virtuous actions

There are four types of results that can manifest as the fruit of virtuous actions: the virtuous results that corresponds to merit (or complete

ripening); the virtuous result that corresponds to the cause; the conditioning result; the result that produces the individual's activity.

By 'virtuous result that corresponds to merit' is meant the force that brings about rebirth among humans, Asuras and Devas of the passion world respectively, according to the accumulation of small, medium or great merit. Above these three types of retribution there is also the possibility of rebirth among the Devas of the higher dimensions of existence (the form and formless worlds), as a result of the 'imperturbable karma' deriving from the practice of meditative stability[44].

The 'virtuous result that corresponds to the cause in action' manifests in a person's natural predilection, in whichever of the higher states they are reborn, to carry out good deeds enthusiastically and to refrain from acting in a negative manner.

'Virtuous result that corresponds to the cause in experience' means the concurrence of ten positive circumstances in life corresponding to (repudiation of) the respective non-virtuous actions:

1. A long life and few illnesses as the result of not having killed other beings or tortured animals.
2. Wealth and no disturbance from thieves or enemies in the case of not having stolen.
3. A beautiful and virtuous consort and few enemies by having abstained from sexual misconduct.
4. Being loved and praised by all by not having lied.
5. Being respected by one's acquaintances by having abstained from slandering.
6. Always being treated with kindness by having abstained from speaking in an offensive way.
7. Being listened to with attention and consideration by having abstained from chattering in vain.
8. Easily accomplishing any aim by having abstained from craving.
9. Never being subjected to bad deeds by having abstained from malevolence.
10. Upholding right view that conforms to reality as the result of having renounced erroneous ideas.

[44] In Tibetan *mi g.yo ba'i las.*

As regards the conditioning result that determines the environment (of rebirth), one is reborn in pleasant places that are the opposite of those usually listed as congruous with the ten non-virtuous actions.

The result that produces the individual's activity, instead, manifests in the increase of the particular virtuous action in which one has engaged in the past, in order to accumulate ever greater merit.

5. HAVING SHAME AND RESTRAINT AND CULTIVATING FAITH

5.1. The sense of shame and restraint

Having a firmly established sense of shame and restraint[45] depends basically on believing in the law of causality of karma. In fact, those who do not accept or are not firmly convinced about the principle of karma show no hesitation in relating to others with the only thought of their own gain or the fulfilment of their own wishes, having no concern whatever for the law of karma and no sense of shame or restraint at all.

On the contrary, those who really believe in the law of cause and effect of karma will not dare to act without considering and respecting it, and if circumstances compel them to perform a bad deed, on recognising their error they would feel shame. If they then wittingly continue to perform this action, as well as displeasing others they would have such remorse that they would acquire a sense of restraint once and for all.

If we believe in all the teachings on the law of causality of karma transmitted by Buddha and contained in the sutras and if we have experience of it by having trained our mind even minimally in the principle that underlies it, it will be impossible to maintain behaviour which is not based on a sense of shame and restraint. If we don't have the feelings of shame and restraint, in fact, it really means that we have not integrated with the teachings on karma and that we have not succeeded in applying through presence what we have learned in theory. People

[45] In Tibetan *ngo tsha khrel yod*, literally 'having a sense of shame and restraint', usually in reference to a person of wholesome integrity who respects others' sensitivity.

of this kind may even have had the good fortune to enter the teachings and to listen to and to study the precious Dharma, but being motivated only by personal gain and the satisfaction of their own desires they will never succeed in making the real sense of the teaching be born within them. Living shut off in a castle of pride and presumption, it will prove difficult for such people to succeed in really recognising the true nature of the teacher. So, it will be even more difficult for faith and devotion towards a teacher and the teachings he or she transmits to be born in such people. For this reason the great teacher Longchenpa, in his phrase "having shame and restraint and cultivating faith", wanted to indicate clearly that the feelings of shame and restraint are the indispensable basis for giving rise to faith.

5.2. The need to cultivate faith

The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation (Thar lam gsal sgron) by Adzam Drugpa says (op. 12: p. 185, 1):

⌘ In general faith is as indispensable as the wheel that drives a carriage, one of the seven precious emblems of royalty[46].
In fact (a sutra) says:

Faith is a precious wheel,
Day and night it leads us to virtue.

Faith is also the most important among the seven noble riches (of the Bodhisattvas)[47]. Being the cause of realising all the wishes and all the happiness of this and the next life, it is like a precious

[46] The seven 'precious attributes' necessary for royal government (*rgyal srid rin po che sna bdun*) are: the precious wheel, the precious jewel, the precious queen, the precious minister, the precious elephant, the precious horse, the precious commander. (O.N.) The wheel or *cakra* is the symbolic implement by means of which the mythical *cakravartin* (literally 'turner of the wheel') or universal monarch of the ancient Indian tradition maintained his power.

[47] The seven noble riches (*'phags pa'i nor bdun*) are: faith, morality, study, generosity, a sense of shame, restraint, *prajñā*.

wish-fulfilling jewel. Being the source of all good qualities, it is like a treasure. It is the foot that enables us to tread the path of liberation and of omniscience. It is the hand that is indispensable in order to gather all the virtuous qualities. For this reason in *The Treasure of Qualities (Yon tan mdzod)* Jigmed Lingpa says:

Faith is the best jewel, the best treasure, the best foot; like the hands, it is the basis for gathering virtues.

Thus faith in general is the preliminary factor in any true teaching; in particular it is the essence of Refuge, for which in reality nothing else is needed. Thus it is very important to have a stable faith without hypocrisy. A sutra says:

(Buddhas) delight in those who have faith and devotion.

And the teacher Padma from Oddiyana said:

Whoever has faith based on trust receives the empowering flow.

So, according to the degree of faith and devotion we have: higher, average or lower, we will receive the corresponding proportion of empowering flow. If we have no faith or devotion it will be impossible to receive the compassionate energy and the empowering flow. A sutra says:

> The virtuous qualities can never arise
> In those without faith,
> Just as a sprout can never be born
> From a burnt seed.

And the great teacher of Oddiyana (Padmasambhava) said:

> A person without faith is like a cave facing north:
> They will never receive the sun of compassionate energy.

In particular in Vajrayana there are considered to be two causes that hinder practitioners of the stages of creation and completion

and of Dzogchen from attaining realisation: a contrary view (in relation to the teaching), and doubt. Therefore an attitude of faith and of genuine devotion, that does not create any separation between the individual and the teaching itself, is the only effective cause for swift obtainment of the empowering flow and the realisations, like the 'white panacea' medicine (which heals all illnesses). One can understand this truth by reading the biographies of the realised teachers of India and Tibet. *The Pure Dimension of Manjushri ('Jam dpal zhing bkod)* says:

All dharmas are secondary causes
And depend entirely on intention.

And the great (teacher) of Oddiyana said:

I, Padmasambhava, will never be far from men and women who have faith, I will always be present before them. My life knows neither time nor death. Before every person with faith a Padmasambhava will be present.

Direct understanding of the view of the absolute condition, too, depends only on faith. In fact, a sutra says:

Shariputra! The absolute can be perceived only through faith. ⌘

As we have seen, it is very important to have a very stable faith as the foundation of the path.

5.3. The various types of faith

There are three distinct types of faith: faith based on admiration, faith based on desire, and faith based on trust; or four, if one adds irreversible faith[48].

[48] In Tibetan *dang ba'i dad pa, 'dod pa'i dad pa, yid ches kyi dad pa, phyir mi ldog pa'i dad pa,* respectively.

In this regard *The Chariot of the Two Truths (bDen gnyis shing rta)* by Jigmed Lingpa says (op. 15: p. 335, 1):

> ⌘ Faith based on admiration arises when, recognising the characteristics of the teaching and seeing that the morality, wisdom and virtues of the sublime (teachers) are never exhausted, you feel a sense of admiration, of satisfaction and of attachment all at the same time.
> Faith based on desire arises when, recognising the characteristics of the truth of suffering, you fear the cycle of birth and death and understand that the only release consists in the sacred Dharma that teaches the truths of cessation and of the path and that you have to rely on a teacher that teaches such a path. Thus it is similar to the intense desire a bee feels for a flower.
> Faith based on trust arises when in the depth of your heart you have firm confidence in the Three Jewels and, certain that they never delude, you recognise that for a realised one and for an ordinary person any feeling of happiness that may be experienced, up to the simplest tranquillity of mind, depends solely on the compassionate energy of the Three Jewels and that, conversely, any feeling of suffering that may be undergone, down to the subtlest pain an Arhat may endure, depends solely on one's karma, and you no longer have any doubts about this.
> Irreversible faith means that, in general, during the phases of study, reflection and meditation, and in particular during the Refuge, any illness, disturbance, pain, provocation from enemies or evil beings, or adversities that may come and however severe they may be, (your faith as a practitioner) never wavers, (being inseparably integrated) like salt dissolved in water. ⌘

Faith based on admiration and faith based on desire can easily fade due to circumstances, thus it is faith based on trust, and especially irreversible faith, to which one must really aspire. In particular, as irreversible faith only arises on the basis of actual experience of the state communicated by the teacher through his or her teachings, it gives birth to unwavering faith in the teacher and in his or her teachings. Thus it is

the most important of all, like a monarch among subjects. Thus it is this type of faith that we should pursue most of all.

6. FOLLOWING TEACHERS AND VIRTUOUS COMPANIONS[49]

Practitioners who always follow a genuine teacher and virtuous spiritual companions purify their minds and see all good things multiply. Those who, conversely, follow a teacher without qualities and bad companions procure obstacles for their own minds and see negative factors multiply. Thus it is important to always follow teachers and virtuous companions.

In his work *The Chariot of the Two Truths* Jigmed Lingpa illustrates thus the benefits obtained by following a teacher (op. 15: p. 250, 5):

> ⌘ To succeed in distinguishing precisely between actions that produce merits or hindrances; to discern between the real teaching and what is only a falsification of the teaching; to understand correctly the meaning of all that you study and apply, from Refuge all the way to total liberation: all this is the result of following a virtuous teacher. If a stump of common wood were to fall in the forest of medicinal plants on the Malaya mountains[50] it too would after a little time be pervaded with the perfume and fragrance of sandalwood and would be mistaken for the latter. Similarly, normal persons totally conditioned by the passions are like a prickly plant, coarse and unrestrained like a bad piece of dry wood. When they have to choose how to act, they make mistakes. When they should give, they are miserly. They are slaves to attachment since birth. They do not have the slightest capacity to endure anything. They consider what is not

[49] The Tibetan term translated as 'teacher' is *dge ba'i bshes gnyen*, literally 'virtuous friend' or 'spiritual friend'.

[50] The Malaya mountains, with abundant sandalwood forests, are part of the Deccan plateau.

the path as the path. They consider what is not the fruit as the fruit. They do not exude the fragrance of morality and do not possess the qualities of contemplation. However, by following a wise teacher even people such as these, more similar to bulls (than to humans), would begin to emulate his or her behaviour. There is the example of the son of a Brahmin who had made a necklace with the fingers of nine hundred and ninety nine persons whom he had killed. Finally, (when he was about) to murder even his own mother, he met Buddha and thought of attacking him too, but after listening to his teachings and following them he understood the truth[51]. As is written in *The Discourses on Vinaya ('Dul ba lung)*:

Just as a climbing plant winds itself around (to the top of) the sal tree[52],
Those who follow wise teachers
Become embraced by the splendour of goodness. ꕥ

Thus we should clearly understand that it is of fundamental importance for a practitioner to follow a teacher because it is precisely in this way that all good qualities arise.

6.1. Various types of teachers

The sutras and tantras list diverse categories of teachers: the teacher that leads to liberation, the teacher that shows the way to distinguish between good and evil, the teacher that protects from fear, the teacher of the lineage that has the empowering flow, the teacher that discloses the natural state, and so on. But, which is the kind of teacher needed by a practitioner of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo? In *The Stairway to Liberation* Jigmed Lingpa says (op. 13: p. 176, 5):

[51] The story of Aṅgulimālā, 'necklace of fingers', can also be found in *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish* (*mDo bzangs blun*), ed. Stephen Frye, pp. 180-195, Dharamsala 1981.
[52] The *sāl* tree (Shorea robusta) is called *spos dkar* in Tibetan.

⌘ Concerning the classification (of the various kinds of teachers), *The Tantra that Reunites the Essence (sPyi mdo dgongs pa 'dus pa)*[53] says:

Externally, there is the teacher who is expert in dispelling doubts;
Internally, the teacher who with infinite kindness transmits the Mantrayana instructions;
In secret, the root teacher who shows the unborn nature of the mind;
The teacher of the natural base;
The teacher of the purity of one's mind;
The teacher that communicates through vision;
The teacher of the human lineage:
The (various types of teachers) can be outlined in this way. ⌘

Thus seven types of teachers are listed. The third type, "in secret, the root teacher who shows the unborn nature of the mind" automatically includes the last four[54]. Such a teacher is the root or source whence there can manifest all the qualities related to the experience of understanding of (fundamental points of the teaching like) the base, path and fruit, view, meditation and behaviour, dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya, the Three Vajras, and so on. In *The Chariot of the Two Truths* Jigmed Lingpa says (op. 15: p. 274, 2):

⌘ The unchangeable nature of enlightenment, the state of dharmakaya possessing all the supreme qualities[55], can be achieved only through a teacher. ⌘

[53] *sPyi mdo dgongs pa 'dus pa*, the root *tantra* of Anuyoga, is the *tantra* regularly quoted by gNubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes in *bSam gtan mi sgron* under the name *rNal 'byor grub pa'i lung*. (O.N.)

[54] The teacher of the natural base (*rang bzhin gzhi'i bla ma*) refers to the recognition of the teacher as one's own primordial state. The teacher of the purity of one's mind (*dag pa rang sems kyi bla ma*) refers to the perception of the pure dimension as the true state of the teacher. The teacher that communicates through vision (*snang ba rda'i bla ma*) may refer to transmission from the teacher through visions, dreams etc. (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu)

[55] Tibetan *rnam kun mchog ldan*, literally 'supreme state having all forms'

By 'root teacher' we should not understand a teacher we choose on the basis of his or her learning, titles, powerful rank or special attraction we feel towards him or her and whom we then consider 'our root teacher'. The true meaning of 'root teacher' refers to the teacher who, according to the view of the Anuttaratantras, transmits the wisdom of the fourth initiation[56] or, according to the view of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, directly introduces the practitioner to the total, natural state of self-perfection and who then, through the power of methods based on experience, enables the dissolution of all doubts.

Such a teacher, deemed as the one who has openly disclosed to the practitioner his or her true condition or basic nature and at the same time as being inseparable from the understanding of that state that has been attained, is also called 'the teacher of the natural base', 'the teacher of the purity of one's mind' and 'the teacher who communicates through vision' according to whichever is the most prominent aspect.

Although we have indicated the various types of teachers and their characteristics, it is difficult in our degenerate age to distinguish between a genuine teacher and one with no qualities, and as there is the grave risk of making a mistake practitioners must become skilled, as the profound texts of the tradition aver, first of all in examining the teacher, then in following him or her, and finally in understanding and integrating within themselves the state of knowledge and the behaviour communicated by the teacher.

Through these three points we must learn to distinguish accurately between the characteristics of a qualified teacher worthy of following and those of a teacher who is not worth following, in order not to delude oneself. This factor is of paramount importance for following the path.

[56] In Tantra there are four initiations: 1. of the vase (*bum dbang*), 2. secret (*gsang dbang*), 3. of wisdom (*shes rab ye shes kyi dbang*), 4. of the word (*tshig dbang*). The first three correspond to the aspects of Body, Voice and Mind, while the fourth entails introduction to the ultimate nature of mind as the essence of enlightenment.

In order to attain liberation a practitioner has to follow a qualified teacher. In particular, to enable understanding of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo to arise in one's mind it is absolutely indispensable to follow a teacher who has already liberated his or her own state by means of that same understanding. So, first of all it is necessary to recognise accurately the characteristics of a teacher worthy of following.

When we say 'a teacher worthy of following' we should not think of someone who only has the fame or title of being the tulku or reincarnation of a great lama, of someone who only knows how to comment cleverly on a Dharma text, or even of someone who only knows properly how to confer a tantric initiation by placing the ceremonial vase on the practitioner's head and reciting the mantras contained in the specific ritual text. All the sutra and tantra literature contains descriptions of the characteristic qualities of a teacher or guru, and it is on the basis of what is written in these texts that we must learn to distinguish between the characteristics of a qualified teacher and those of a teacher not worthy of following.

6.2.1. The characteristics of a teacher worthy of following

The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation by Adzam Drugpa gives a brief description of a qualified teacher (op. 12: 177, 5):

> ཞ In general, as the character of ordinary people changes easily due to the company they keep and other adventitious circumstances, it is necessary to always follow a virtuous teacher and virtuous companions and, emulating the teachers of the past, to try to develop one's qualities more and more, however modest they might be.
> As we are now in the degenerate age and the emotions manifest very intensely, many unfortunate people afflicted by the grave defect of 'wrong view' have come to be gathered who in previous lives did not purify themselves sufficiently or did not ex-

press the aspiration (to follow the Dharma), or who, hindered by demons assuming the most multifarious guises in order to create obstacles, follow views that lead them to stray into wrong paths. For these reasons it is difficult to find a teacher who completely possesses all the characteristics listed in the precious series of tantras. In any case, a teacher worthy of following is said to possess these qualities:

1. A pure mind due to observance of the three vows: the outer vow of Pratimoksha, the inner vow of the Bodhisattva, the secret vow of Secret Mantra.
2. Vast learning based on knowledge of the sutra and tantra scriptures.
3. A mind suffused with great love and compassion for all living beings.
4. Perfect knowledge of the three outer sections of the sutras and of the inner Secret Mantra, as well as the capacity to perform the rituals of the four series of tantras.
5. Inner realisation of the special qualities of enlightenment[57] that result from having put into practice the true sense (of the teachings).
6. The capacity to attract fortunate disciples by means of the 'four attitudes that attract': giving, speaking kindly, adapting to disciples' conditions, acting congruently with what he or she teaches[58].

It says (in the texts) that one should follow such a teacher. In particular, concerning teachers of the Secret Mantra Vajrayana it is said that:

1. They should have ripened their state through the uninterrupted flow of initiations described in the precious series of tantras.

[57] In Tibetan *spangs rtogs kyi yon tan*, literally the qualities derived from having overcome (obstacles) and having acquired (omniscience).

[58] Tibetan *bsdu ba'i dngos po bzhi*. See Chapter Four: 6.2.3.

2. They should not have breached the samayas and vows taken during initiations.
3. They should have few disturbing thoughts and emotions and consequently a peaceful and humble character.
4. Internally they should have understood the true sense of the tantra concerning the way and the fruit of Secret Mantra Vajrayana.
5. They should have obtained completely the signs of the approaches and attainments[59] such as the vision of the Yidam deity etc.
6. They should have liberated themselves by means of understanding and realised the true sense of the fundamental nature.
7. They should have a mind full of compassion and consequently devote themselves only to the good of others.
8. They should have relinquished attachment to this worldly life and not be involved in many activities.
9. Committed mainly to their future life, their mind should be turned to the Dharma with diligence.
10. The recognition that samsara is suffering awakens great sadness in them, that they should transmit to others.
11. They should be skilled in teaching disciples by any means suitable to their diverse conditions and capacities.
12. Carrying out the instructions of their own teachers they should maintain the empowering flow of the lineage.

It says (in the texts) that one should follow such a teacher. In particular, concerning teachers that transmit the secret instructions[60] a tantra says that:

He or she should be wise and not involved in activities,
Should have perfectly ripened the true sense of the ultimate nature,

[59] In general the four approaches and attainments (*bsnyen sgrub bzhi*) include the whole tantric practice tied to visualisation of the deity and recitation of the *mantra* but they may also refer to other aspects of Vajrayāna. See Part Two, Chapter Five: 2.8.9.4.1.
[60] 'Secret instructions' or *upadeśa* (*man ngag*) often alludes, as in the present case, to the rDzogs chen Atiyoga teaching.

Should not neglect their (disciples') wishes:
These are the characteristics of a teacher of Secret Mantra.

This means that someone who has trained his or her mind in the state of bodhichitta, that is the true sense of tantra, and has really understood the fundamental nature, is the best and the supreme sage. Inwardly not involved in activities tied to the eight worldly dharmas[61] etc., their experience being perfectly congruent with the philosophical analyses and scriptures enables them to transmit the true sense according to the level of understanding of disciples. (He or she) might be someone whom we recognise, through direct or indirect signs, as a teacher we have been connected with through previous lives and for whom, as he or she is very different from others, we feel intense devotion. Or we might meet a teacher whose teachings, whatever they are, become an antidote to our emotions and really benefit us: in such cases, this is the teacher we must follow regardless of the external signs and appearance he or she displays. In any case the most important thing is that he or she should have obtained the empowering flow of the lineage and should be able to communicate the fundamental points of the view, meditation and behaviour on the basis of their own direct experience. ⌘

And (op. 12: p. 182, 6):

⌘ One should deem a teacher who possesses the qualities listed to be a manifestation of the compassionate energy and wisdom of all the Buddhas of the ten directions who has assumed human guise for the benefit of sentient beings. Thus his or her compassionate energy and empowering flow are equal to Buddha's. Having a good relationship with him or her, one can attain enlightenment in a single life. However, even if one sets up a bad relationship certainly (one day) one will be released from samsara. ⌘

[61] The eight worldly *dharmas* or concerns (*'jig rten chos brgyad*) are: gain and loss, fame and infamy, praise and blame, pleasure and woe.

Moreover, *The Oral Instructions of the Teacher Samantabhadra (Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung)* by Paltrul Rinpoche state (op. 2: p. 128, 1):

> ⌘ When it says to examine a teacher intelligently, this must be done before receiving initiations and teachings. If he or she completely possesses the qualities of a teacher then he or she should be followed, but not if he or she does not. However, once you start to follow (a teacher) then you should see only good in everything he or she does and think only of his or her qualities, cultivating pure vision and faith. If you think of his or her faults (criticising him or her, etc.) then infinite obstacles will ensue.
> Although examining a teacher generally consists in observing whether or not he or she possesses the qualities listed in the sutras and tantras, it is necessary above all that he or she has Bodhichitta[62], hence the examination can be reduced to checking whether or not (the teacher) has Bodhichitta. In fact, if he or she has Bodhichitta then he or she will strive to benefit his or her disciples in this and future lives and consequently everything will prove useful. The instructions of such a teacher, being in harmony with the Mahayana, will in any case become the perfect path.
> Teachers without Bodhichitta, on the other hand, who have attachment to their own self-interest, will not succeed in really helping their disciples, and their teachings, however deep and extraordinary they might appear, will in conclusion turn out to serve only the interests of this earthly life. Thus, as all the factors for examining a teacher can be subsumed in this one fundamental point, a teacher abounding with Bodhichitta, whatever his or her outer appearance, is the one to follow.
> Those who have no Bodhichitta, even though briefly they might display the qualities of aspiring to liberation, of being saddened and disgusted by samsara, of the capacities related to practice

[62] In this case *bodhicitta* should be understood in the sense of genuine, total compassion.

and behaviour, etc., should not be followed. Nevertheless, (at times) the special qualities of great sages are hidden and however much ordinary people such as us may examine them we do not succeed in discovering them. Moreover, there being hypocritical and fraudulent people who, skilled in dissimulation, affect an aura of holiness, the most important teacher is the one with whom one has a relationship from former lives. When, on meeting a teacher or hearing his or her voice or even just hearing his or her name, a faith arises that can make your hair stand on end and can instantly change your view, evidently this is a teacher with whom you have a relationship since former lives and so does not need examining. ⌘

And (op. 2: p. 129, 5):

⌘ In general, since meeting our teacher depends on our view (being) pure or impure and on the power of our karma, we should consider a teacher who kindly transmits spiritual advice and teachings to us, however he or she may appear, to be Buddha in person and always recognise him or her in this way. If we have no good karma from previous lives then we cannot have the fortune to meet a good teacher. If we have impure view then even though we may meet Buddha we will not be able to discern his qualities. Thus our most important teacher is the one that we meet thanks to the karma of our previous lives and who kindly transmits the teachings to us. ⌘

6.2.2. The characteristics of a teacher not worthy of following

Regarding the characteristics of a teacher not worthy of following, *The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation* by Adzam Drugpa states (op. 12: 182, 1):

⌘ 1. Those who, in spite of not possessing (the qualities of having) studied, reflected and meditated, feel proud of their prestigious position;

2. Those who, in spite of barely having (such qualities), are concerned only with the eight worldly dharmas and accept disciples indiscriminately and hypocritically, transmitting initiations and instructions without having their own teacher's permission;
3. Those who, having only an arid view made solely of words, wrongly engage in the profound sense and communicate it in the same way;
4. Those who, in spite of having no qualities, feed on the honours heaped on them by common people and believe themselves very important;
5. Those who lack the feelings of love and compassion of Bodhichitta:
All of these should be disavowed.

The lung (*rTsal chen sprugs pa*) says:

The teachings of a teacher without qualities, who is like a monkey:
Even if they are secret instructions they will certainly make one stray on the wrong path.

And the great Ogyen (Padmasambhava) said:

Not examining the teacher is like drinking poison,
Not examining the disciple is like jumping off a cliff. ⌘

All of this is very clear. Furthermore, in *The Chariot of the Two Truths* Jigmed Lingpa says (op. 15: p. 255, 1):

⌘ Brahmins, for example, esteem only their family lineage of descent, and aside from (their interest in) the *Vedas* and magic formulae they feel no need to attain enlightenment, and they firmly uphold the tradition of their ancestors that bear no relation to Buddha's teaching. Likewise (some people) are proud of their family or paternal or maternal lineage, they try to strengthen their position as much as possible and, engaging in worldly af-

fairs and politics as if these were the holy Dharma they are completely engrossed in distractions and material things without the slightest reliance in the wisdom obtained through study, reflection and meditation. There are others who, worried that the wealth and power of their residence might diminish, however meagre their engagement in study and reflection think only of exploiting worldly fame and prestige. To this end they explain the vast and profound teachings to others while they themselves think only of business, of the profits from their crops, of disturbing the lives of beings and of acquiring material well-being. With these attachments they thoroughly uphold the ancient habits of their realms and families thereby ineluctably contradicting what they teach, just like a mill with a wooden grinder (that does nothing but wear itself out). ⌘

And, further (op. 15: 257, 4):

⌘ Those who have not studied enough and thus do not have the qualities (that ensue from knowledge) of the scriptures; those who do not know what to accept or reject and thus break their vows and samayas by their behaviour; those who lack the wisdom that ensues from understanding the essential nature yet pretend to act in conformity with the conduct of perfect realisation; those whose river of love and compassion has dried up yet who teach others only for honour and for gain: just as a madman whom we relied upon would always lead us on wrong paths, all of these would only lead us over the cliff of false Dharma into the abyss of wrong view. ⌘

As we have read, in order not to run the risk of self-delusion we must learn to examine properly and recognise clearly the qualities that derive from following a genuine teacher and the defects that derive from following a teacher who merely pretends to be such and in fact has no qualities at all. This is a factor of great importance regarding the path.

6.2.3. *The characteristics of disciples worthy or unworthy of being accepted*

As we have seen, the great guru of Oddiyana (Padmasambhava) has said that not examining whether or not a disciple is suitable is like jumping off a cliff. This means that not only should the disciple examine the character of the teacher: the teacher too should thoroughly examine the character of the disciple. In this regard in *The Precious Treasure of Qualities (Yon tan mdzod)* Jigmed Lingpa broadly explains (op. 27: p. 26, 3):

꙰ Those who have the thick armour (of determination) and stable intelligence,
Who serve (the teacher) without any concern for their own body or life,
Who unfailingly carry out whatever they are told
And never protect themselves are liberated by devotion alone.
Those who have faith, wisdom, learning through study and great compassion,
Who keep their vows and samayas and are humble in body, voice and mind,
Who are open and generous, have pure vision and a sense of restraint,
Who knowing how to satisfy their teacher show they have the best character,
Who like a good horse never get angry when rebuked (by the teacher),
Who like a boat are never vexed if asked to go hither and thither (by the teacher),
Who like a bridge support anything, whether good or bad,
Who like a (smith's) anvil bear both heat and cold,
Who like a servant do everything they are asked,
Who like a road sweeper are without conceit,
Who like a yak with cut horns are never arrogant:
This, according to the scriptures, is the way to follow a teacher. ꙰

These, then, are the qualities that disciples should have, either naturally or by acquiring them with great zeal in order to render themselves suitable. The same text then lists the qualities of an unsuitable disciple (op. 27: p. 25, 5):

⌘ Those who are satisfied only by material things
And whose faith is hypocritical and changeable like the four seasons:
First of all they do not manage to enter the way of Dharma, just like a wild yak (that cannot enter a corral),
Then they hate study and reflection, concerned only with this life;
Finally, taking sides with non-virtuous friends
They commit only evil deeds, like a gorilla in the forest (who never frequents humans).
When they are before a teacher they want to run away,
And wherever they go they are conditioned by their negative deeds.
When bidden to remain in retreat they lose their practitioner's 'stance'
Like the tip of a blade of kusha grass blown about by the wind.
With a bad character, expert in guile, with hypocritical words
They follow teachers as if they were musk deer
To extract the supreme Dharma from them as if it were musk
And then eagerly return to their hunt, disregarding their samayas.
Full of too many ideas that they never put into practice
On the basis of the essential points of the instructions they have received,
They seek new teachings to collect, and finally, tired of all this
They no longer find new (teachings) to receive and forget (the few they knew) before. ⌘

This means that a teacher should not transmit the profound teachings to a disciple without qualities and who has the faults described above. In fact, if he or she does transmit them there is the risk that this might create obstacles for both teacher and disciple. If you are follow-

ing a teacher and you notice that you have one or more of these faults then it is extremely important that you recognise them for what they are and seek to correct them as soon as you can.

6.3. Becoming skilled in following a teacher

Having found a perfectly qualified teacher, which is the way to follow him or her? In *The Precious Treasure of Qualities* Jigmed Lingpa states (op. 27: p. 25, 4):

⌘ The same way that a patient follows a doctor, a traveller follows a guide,
A fearful person follows a (courageous) escort, a merchant (on a journey) follows the captain (of the ship),
A person voyaging by boat follows the ferryman:
If you are terrified of the enemies: birth and death and the emotions, this is the way to follow (your teacher). ⌘

This is the right way to follow a teacher and not, on the contrary, with the attitude of a hunter trying to obtain a deer's horns in order to extract perfume. Moreover, you should always please the teacher by the three ways of satisfying: the best way is through the practice of meditation; otherwise, by serving with body and voice; or, finally, with material offerings. This is the correct way to follow and to respect a teacher.

The Oral Instructions of the Teacher Samantabhadra by Paltrul Rinpoche state (op. 2: p. 122, 5):

⌘ Even though a teacher's behaviour may not be predetermined, you should think that any way he or she acts is done as skilful means (to benefit others) and have only pure vision. ⌘

And (op. 2: p. 123, 1):

⌘ Saraha lived making arrows, Shavaripa was a hunter, etc. Nearly all the powerful Siddhas of India adopted ways of life

belonging to the lowest social castes such as the chandalas (outcasts) etc. So you should not misconstrue the activities (of teachers) but instead train to have only pure vision. ⌘

And (op. 2: p. 123, 4):

⌘ If on the contrary we start to judge (a teacher's) faults, it is said that even if we were to attend Buddha for a long time we would find fault with him. ⌘

And (op. 2: p. 123, 6):

⌘ So, if we discern some faults in our holy teacher's behaviour we should regret it thinking: "It is I who have impure vision, there is not even an atom of error or fault in the teacher's behaviour", in this way restoring and strengthening our faith and pure vision. ⌘

And (op. 2: p. 124, 3):

⌘ If it seems the teacher is annoyed with us, instead of getting angry we should think that he or she has seen a fault in us and that, being disappointed, he or she has understood that the time has come to help by rebuking us: that is why he or she has scolded us. Then, when the teacher is in a calm state, we should go to him or her and confess our mistakes, pledging not to repeat them. ⌘

And (op. 2: p. 125, 3):

⌘ Do not befriend those who hate or speak ill of the teacher. If you are able to transform their scepticism and contempt, do so, otherwise it is better not to be so open or to converse with them. ⌘

And (op. 2: p. 125, 6):

⌘ All the time you are with the innermost circle of the teacher and the vajra brothers and sisters do not feel discomfort or tired-

ness, rather stay together with pleasure, like a (comfortable) belt. If at a certain moment there is something that needs doing, do it dropping any sense of haughtiness, (mingling with the others) like salt (in water). If we are offended or get involved in arguments, or if are entrusted a task that proves too heavy, we have to bear it like the column of a house. ꕥ

And (op. 2: p. 129, 2):

ꕥ The whole time that you follow a teacher, without worrying about difficulties due to heat or cold, hunger or thirst etc. you should follow your teacher's instructions, requesting (teachings) with faith and devotion. If necessary, ask your teacher's advice about your activities and then act in accord with what he or she tells you, following him or her with total faith. ꕥ

6.4. Becoming skilled in acquiring the teacher's way of being

Fundamentally the phrase "becoming skilled in acquiring the teacher's way of being"[63] means that it is not sufficient to follow a teacher, instead it is necessary to strive with diligence until all the authentic aspects of the teacher's state of knowledge and behaviour have arisen within us. How should we strive? Certainly not on the basis of our own self-interest, using a teacher as if he or she is a cow caught by thieves. We must seek to achieve the various aspects related to the state of the teacher's knowledge and behaviour, trying to serve him or her with sincere trust and devotion and adapting to the diverse circumstances of place and time. In fact *The Chariot of the Two Truths* by Jigmed Lingpa says (op. 15: p. 305, 6):

[63] In Tibetan *dgongs spyod bslab pa*. The term *dgongs spyod*, here rendered 'way of being', comprises the two words *dgongs pa* that means the teacher's state of knowledge, way of understanding, thinking etc., and *spyod pa* that means the way of acting and behaving. In short this expression means training to discern in oneself the state of wisdom that the teacher communicates by means of his or her genuine way of being.

⌘ Finally, without being complacent about just being close to the teacher in the ordinary manner you must learn to achieve the teacher's state of liberation and behaviour. *The Receptacle Sutra (Za ma tog bkod pa)* says:

After three incalculable kalpas had passed Buddha went all around the world in search of a teacher, until his feet (having become worn out) reached his waist. ⌘

And (op. 15: p. 306, 3):

⌘ Once you hold your teacher dearer than your own life, how should you strive for his or her state of knowledge and behaviour? As all the profound series of sutras and tantras affirm that the teacher is an emanation of Buddha, striving for the state of liberation of the teacher's body, voice and mind is the same as striving for Buddha's state of liberation. So, thinking: "I too will do the same", you should engage in devoting your time to study, reflection and meditation. *The Section on the Bodhisattvas (Bodhisattvapiṭaka)* says:

Practising the instructions received from your teacher you perfect hundreds of millions of altruistic intentions. You develop an equal number of capacities[64]. You receive an equal amount of the empowering flow and purify an equal number of negative actions. You defeat an equal number of demons and enter an equal number of 'Dharma doors'. You complete an equal number of accumulations and purify an equal number of conducts. An equal number of aspiration wishes expressed (in the past) will come about and you will acquire an equal number of qualities. In short, perfecting all the Buddha's Dharmas depends only on and derives only from your teacher. ⌘

[64] The five capacities (*dbang po rnam pa lnga*) of faith, of perseverance or diligence, of presence, of contemplation and of *prajñā*. (O.N.)

Thus practitioners who have entered on the path of Dzogchen must engage with diligence in the points expounded above.

Furthermore, *The Oral Instructions of the Teacher Samantabhadra* by Paltrul Rinpoche state (op. 2: p. 125, 3):

⌘ Understanding all the ways that you must follow your teacher you should be like a swan on a lake, slowly gliding and delighting in it without sullying its water. Or, like a bee in a garden, tasting the nectar of the flowers without damaging their colour or fragrance. Tirelessly and easefully doing everything the teacher asks, you absorb the teacher's state. Through faith and earnest diligence you should assimilate within yourself all the qualities of study, reflection and meditation of the holy teacher, like the contents of one perfect vase being poured into another equally perfect one. ⌘

And (op. 2: p. 126, 4):

⌘ The supreme field (of merits) of all the practices of Refuge and of the accumulation of merit is the teacher. In particular, when the teacher confers an initiation or transmits a teaching he or she absorbs the compassionate energy and empowering flow of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the three times and ten directions thereby becoming inseparable from all the Enlightened Ones. Thus offering him or her a morsel of food at such a time is more meritorious than hundreds or thousands of offerings in other circumstances.

Meditating on any deity practice of the creation or kyedrim stage, the form of the chosen deity that manifests in essence is none other than our root teacher: recognising this we will rapidly obtain the siddhis. Also, regarding all the methods to enable wisdom to arise in the completion or dzogrim stage, only devotion and the empowering flow of the teacher make the wisdom of understanding that is the state (of the teacher) arise within us. Thus, as the aim of all the kyedrim and dzogrim practices is embodied in the teacher, all the sutras and tantras say that the teacher is Buddha in person. ⌘

And (op. 2: p. 127, 5):

⌘ Even though the state of the holy teacher is inseparable from all the Buddhas, he or she has taken human guise in order to guide us, who are in impure vision. Now that our teacher is alive we should strive to do everything he or she says and to unite our minds with his or her state by means of the three kinds of service (or satisfaction). (However there are some people who) instead of following the teacher's instructions and serving and revering him or her while he or she is still alive, (hypocritically) meditate on a picture of him or her after his or her death. (There are still others who) claiming to meditate on the natural state, seek outside for something very profound while at the same time they neglect to invoke their teacher with devotion in order to receive the qualities of his or her realisation. This means that there is a contradiction between practitioner and practice.
It is also said that during the intermediate state or bardo one can meet and be guided by one's teacher, but this only takes place by virtue of the conjunction of (the disciple's) boundless devotion and the teacher's compassionate energy and invocation: it is not the case that the teacher comes physically (in the bardo). Thus if we lack devotion, however skilful our teacher may be he or she will not be able to guide us in the bardo. ⌘

And (op. 2: p. 129, 3):

⌘ Seeking to achieve the (teacher's) way of being means to carefully observe all his or her conduct and to base our behaviour only on that model.
A proverb says:

All actions are based on imitation:
Whoever imitates the best is the best!

In fact, practising Dharma consists in emulating the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past. So, when following a teacher, emu-

lating his or her example the disciple should try to assimilate within the true state and behaviour of the teacher. The disciple must be like a tsa tsa[65] forged from the mould: just as all the contours of the mould are reproduced on the tsa tsa, the disciple should realise all the qualities of the state of the teacher, or if that is not possible at least part of them. So, a disciple who first becomes skilled in examining, then follows, and finally achieves the state and the behaviour of the teacher is certainly on the perfect path, come what may. ⌘

In *The Stairway to Liberation* Jigmed Lingpa says (op. 13: p. 197, 6):

⌘ Following a teacher and holding him or her as dear as your own eyes you will receive vast, profound teachings. But if you do not practise them with intense concentration, setting aside distraction, then the mere fact of having received them will not enable you to realise the (absolute) state with all the supreme qualities. The *Avataṃsaka Sutra* says:

Like an expert oarsman
Who, while ferrying many people
Dies in the water:
Such is one who does not practise.

And Acharya Aryadeva said:

Someone who has perfected their studies
For millions of kalpas
Yet still seeks empowerment outside
Does not understand the true nature.

For example, Ananda, Buddha Shakyamuni's assistant, served at his lotus feet and had perfectly studied an ocean-like quantity (of his teachings), but at the moment of the first council he had

[65] *Tsha tsha* are votive images shaped with metal moulds depicting miniature Buddhas, deities or *stūpas*.

not yet attained the level of Arhat but only that of 'having entered the stream'[66]. Actually, according to *The Tantra of the Complete Empowerment of Vajrapani (Lag na rdo rje mngon par dbang bskur ba'i rgyud)* Ananda was an emanation of (Buddha) Vajradhara. Thus to believe that we, who are ordinary people, can get enlightened without practising means we are really foolish. So, in order to awaken the deep wisdom primordially abiding within us, we must engage without slacking in what our qualified teacher has transmitted to us through the profound way of symbols, meanings and signs[67]. We must formulate the thought: "I swear never to yield to laziness and apathy even for a second, and never to delay (practice) due to romantic involvements or through craving food! I will not get involved in plans, hopes and worries and I will not succumb to indifference!"
Controlling your mind in this way, not following the things of this life even for an instant like a mother searching for her only son when he is lost, if laziness arises trample it down with awareness, if the thought of delaying (practice) springs to mind force it down as if you were swallowing (something bitter), if you find you are in a state of apathy subdue it. Like a wounded deer or a unicorn you must inhabit solitary places and swear from the bottom of your heart to practise intensely all the teachings you have received. ⌘

6.5. The need to follow virtuous companions

Regarding the need to follow virtuous companions, in *The Chariot of the Two Truths* Jigmed Lingpa explains in a general way (op. 15: p. 309, 1):

⌘ Keeping company with virtuous companions, too, is very useful. *The Sutra Requested by Punsang (dPung bzang gis zhus pa)* says:

[66] The first of the four levels of realisation of the Śrāvakas. See note 117.

[67] In Tibetan *brda don rtags gsum*. In this case the signs refer to the characteristic experiences ensuing from practice.

Like a cart with only one wheel
(That) will not advance even if there is a horse,
So someone without practitioner companions
Will not obtain siddhis.

And, regarding the characteristics of virtuous companions:

Intelligent, of pleasing appearance, clean,
Of noble family, devoted to the Dharma,
Courageous, fearless, with senses under control.
Kindly spoken, generous and compassionate,
Able to endure hunger, thirst and suffering,
Not (wont to) honouring Brahmins and other deities,
Skilful, humble and never neglecting to repay a kindness,
With faith in the Three Jewels: (such) should be one's companion.

(Among the qualities listed), 'of pleasing appearance' means not afflicted by a grave illness. If they do not have all these qualities, then they should have half, a quarter or at least an eighth of them. The qualities that ensue from following such a companion are immeasurable. By emulating their behaviour we too will develop all the virtuous Dharmas and will move far from the wrong path. By explaining to us what to accept and what to reject they will be of great help in following our teacher and in recalling to our mind what we have forgotten of the (teacher's) teachings. ⌘

6.6. The need to relinquish bad companions

Regarding the need to relinquish bad companions, in *The Chariot of the Two Truths* Jigmed Lingpa explains that (op. 15: p. 307, 3):

⌘ Even if they have human bodies, as for their mental attitude bad companions are Asuras, so either directly or indirectly they always misbehave. Aiming to deceive, with a mind dominated

by negative actions their behaviour is in such conflict with (the principle of) forsaking negative actions and pursuing positive actions that even merely keeping such company makes negative actions increase and virtues diminish. This is why they should be relinquished. In fact, *The Sutra of Mindfulness (Dran pa nyer bzhag)* says:

The cause of all attachment, aversion and ignorance comes from bad companions, who are like a poisonous plant.

And *The Sutra of Heaped Jewels (Ratnakuta)*:

What is a bad companion? Someone who causes virtue to diminish and who makes one commit non-virtuous actions. Such a one should not be followed, frequented or even approached.

Regarding their faults, the *Mahaparinirvanasutra* says:

A Bodhisattva should not fear a bad companion in the same way that he or she might fear a mad elephant. In fact, while the latter can only destroy the body the former can destroy utterly one's purity of virtue and of mind. ⌘

6.7. The qualities obtained by relinquishing bad companions

Regarding the qualities obtained by relinquishing bad companions, in *The Chariot of the Two Truths* Jigmed Lingpa explains that (op. 15: p. 308, 2):

⌘ The qualities obtained by relinquishing bad companions are immeasurable. *The Prajñaparamita in Eighteen Thousand Lines (Khri brgyad stong pa)* says:

Subhuti, the qualities obtained by relinquishing bad companions are infinite: it is like always accumulating virtues, it is like

seeing the Tathagatas, it is spending one's life in happiness, it is being reborn in the happy realms of the higher states, it is never forgetting one's Bodhichitta commitment in any (future) birth.

And there are many other copious explanations. ꕥ

So we can understand how important it is for a practitioner to follow totally a qualified teacher and to keep company with virtuous companions, at the same time always being mindful not to receive negative influences from non-virtuous people.

Jigmed Lingpa

CHAPTER THREE

REFUGE, THE BASE OF THE THREE TRAININGS

The indispensable base for practising the Three Trainings is comprised in Refuge in the Three Jewels and the cultivation of supreme Bodhichitta. These two, furthermore, in their turn comprise the first of the 'three sacred foundations'[68] to be observed in every practice.

1. THE MEANING OF REFUGE

There are two ways to understand the meaning of 'taking refuge': the provisional way and the definitive way.

Provisional refuge means taking refuge temporarily in a person, in a non-human being, in the power of a rig ngag mantra etc., with the aim of avoiding direct or indirect disturbances to one's body, voice and mind and even finding shelter in a cave or at the foot of a tree when caught in a downpour.

The aim of definitive refuge, on the other hand, consists not only in overcoming momentary problems but also in resolving their cause or root, which is our dualism, in such a way as to obtain lasting release from the ocean of samsara. To this end we take refuge in the three precious jewels, that is in the Teacher, who teaches the path in a perfect way, in his or her teachings, that constitute the holy Dharma, and in the noble Sangha or community of those who help us apply such teachings in the right way.

[68] For an explanation of the three sacred foundations (*dam pa gsum*) see Part Two, Chapter Nine: 2.

2. THE REFUGE VOW AND TRAINING

Within the specific traditions of teachings there are two distinct systems of 'taking refuge': in the Hinayana we have the 'Refuge vow', linked to taking a specific vow; in the Mahayana there is the 'Refuge training', based on the principle of mind training. Very widespread in Tibetan Buddhism, in particular, is the tradition that unites the two systems known as 'Refuge vow and training'. Furthermore, many consider Refuge a distinctive sign of having entered the path of Buddha's teaching.

Even though (usually in the common vehicle) it is necessary to receive the 'Refuge vow and training' from a teacher during the specific ritual ceremony, one should not think that this is absolutely indispensable. In *The Chariot of the Two Truths* Jigmed Lingpa explains that (op. 15: p. 411, 1):

> ⌘ Without depending on a ceremony you can take the threefold Refuge through your perfect intention and concentration. The same text *(The Sutra on the Repayment of Kindness; Drin lan bsab pa'i mdo)* states:
>
> By engaging with perfect intention and concentration, in spite of the existence of body and voice one can dispense with rituals. This is called 'the (system) without rituals'
>
> In any case only at the end (of having taken refuge), abiding in equanimous contemplation in the state of understanding of non-conceptual prajña, is absolute Refuge: in fact this is the infallible cause of supramundane Refuge that is received (directly) from the ultimate nature of phenomena. ⌘

2.1. The Refuge vow in the Hinayana system

When Buddha Shakyamuni first turned the wheel of Dharma he taught the Four Noble Truths: of suffering, of the origin of suffering,

of its cessation and of the path that leads to its cessation. As the ground of the truths of cessation and of the path to cessation he explained the necessity for ordinary persons to observe moral discipline with the aim of controlling or stopping bad conduct of body, voice and mind. In such a way, on the basis of the individual him or herself and of the most varied conditions and circumstances possible there originated what are known as the 'seven vows for individual liberation' or Pratimoksha vows that comprise the vows of:

1. Gelongpha or bhikshu, for a fully ordained monk.
2. Gelongma or bhikshuni, for a fully ordained nun.
3. Getsulpha or shramanera, for a male novice.
4. Getsulma or shramanerika, for a female novice.
5. Genyenpha or upasaka, for a lay man.
6. Genyenma or upasika, for a lay woman.
7. Gelobma or shikshamana, for a nun aspiring to the vow of gelongma.

Sometimes considered separately, the vow of nyenne[69] can be taken by a genyenpha or genyenma; so in all there are eight Pratimoksha vows.

A person who follows the path of renunciation of the Common Causal Vehicle is obliged therefore to keep one of these eight vows in order to control the impulses of body, voice and mind which lead to acting in a negative way. The origin or cause of every kind of suffering consists in negative actions, and since these are always tied to disturbing emotions such a practitioner must defeat all the enemies consisting of the passions by applying the truths of cessation and of the path and finally attain supreme liberation. For this reason Vasubandhu has said:

Observing moral discipline, after having studied and reflected,
Engage perfectly in meditation.

[69] The *bsnyen gnas* is a vow to be observed for twenty-four hours, similar to the *bsnyung gnas* that lasts two days, one of which devoted to fasting. Also see note 70.

(These verses) underline that moral discipline is the indispensable basis for all the dharmas of the path beginning with study, reflection and meditation, and that the vow is thus the foundation of liberation. Thus people who receive and keep the vow of Refuge in the Three Supreme Jewels are considered to belong to the category of 'genyen who recognise the three Refuges'

The eight types of Pratimoksha vow are closely linked to the three fundamental aspects of the individual, which are the body, voice and mind, and in particular to the physical level. For this reason their specific duration must be respected, whether it is a matter of observing them for the whole of one's life or for only twenty-four hours as in the case of the 'eight-limbed nyenne'[70]. It appears that for this reason the tradition arose of receiving the vow of the 'recognition of the three Refuges' from a teacher, as if it were one of the eight Pratimoksha vows.

2.2. The Refuge training in the Mahayana system

Mahayana practitioners do not have a 'Mahayana Pratimoksha' or a 'Mahayana vow' radically different from those of the Hinayana, however they are distinct from Hinayana practitioners due to the 'seven superiorities' in relation to:

[70] Concerning the famous eight-limbed *bsnyen gnas* (*bsnyen gnas yan lag brgyad*), *The Chariot of the Two Truths* by 'Jigs med gling pa says (op. 15: p. 649, 5):
⌘ Regarding the eight limbed rule, the *bShes spring* says that:

Renounce killing, stealing, having sexual relations, lying,
Drinking alcohol, eating outside allotted mealtimes,
Sleeping on a raised bed, carousing, singing, dancing and garlands.
Observing thus the eight branches
That emulate the Arhats' discipline,
The *gSo sbyong* enables men and women
To obtain a fine human or divine (body).

This means that even just twenty-four hours of *gSo sbyong* (the restoration of virtue and purification of negative deeds) can engender rebirth in whichever of the six Deva realms (of the passion realm) one wishes. ⌘ (O.N.)

1. Attention;
2. Practice;
3. Wisdom;
4. Perseverance;
5. Method;
6. Perfection;
7. Activity[71]

Hence there is a fundamental difference in principle between the observation of a vow, which basically is directed towards not harming others, and training in morality, which has as its objective the good of all beings. For these reasons a vow based on the aim characteristic of the Mahayana is traditionally considered a 'Mahayana vow', and on the basis of the same principles the 'Bodhisattva's Refuge vow and training' and other vows like the eight belonging to the series of the Pratimoksha spread in this tradition. This is demonstrated by the fact that subsequently the observation of the vow and training according to the Bodhisattva system spread widely in Tibet in the traditions of all four main Buddhist schools.

In the original Mahayana tradition, however, there is no concept of 'vow' but only of 'training', and there is a great difference in principle between these two. A vow is in fact something that must be observed even at the risk of one's life while the idea of 'training' implies the need to 'train' with great zeal on the basis of the practitioner's type of intention and of the specific necessities of time and place. The aims and particular characteristics of vow and training are thus very different.

The venerable Atisha and many other teachers have explained clearly that the foundation of the vow and the moral discipline in Hinayana consists in renouncing harming others while the basis of the training in

[71] The seven superiorities (*chen po bdun*) are: 1. attention (*dmigs pa*) directed to the contents of the Mahāyāna scriptures, 2. practice (*sgrub pa*) for one's own realisation and that of others, 3. the wisdom (*ye shes*) of understanding the twofold absence of self-nature, 4. perseverance (*brtson 'grus*) in engagement, 5. skill in method (*thabs*), 6. the perfection (*yang dag*) of the supreme qualities of the Buddhas, 7. spontaneous and uninterrupted spiritual activity (*phrin las*).

morality in Mahayana consists in the commitment to act for the good of all beings. Evidently this was asserted expressly to underline the different objectives of the two traditions and the difference in principle between vow and training.

2.3. Refuge in the Tantric path of transformation

It is in no way indispensable for a person following the path of transformation of Tantra to take any of the eight characteristic Pratimoksha vows of the Hinayana system. It is sufficient to receive from a teacher, during an initiation, only the vow of 'recognising the three Refuges' or to take (yourself) the 'vow and training of Refuge and of Bodhichitta' according to the Mahayana system, visualising in front of you the presence of the immense 'merit field' (the teacher, deities etc.) as the place of Refuge. In this way it is possible to realise the supreme level of tantric practitioner keeping the three vows (of Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana), and this is an extraordinary and particular feature of Mantrayana.

2.4. Refuge in the Ati path of self-liberation

A person who, having as pure motivation the aspiration to attain liberation, studies with a teacher and follows his or her teaching, automatically takes refuge in the teacher and the teaching, and in reality precisely this is the essence of Refuge.

The essence of the vow is morality that derives from the strong wish to liberate oneself from samsara, while its characteristic nature consists in adopting resolute conduct based on the intention not to harm others. Thus it is necessary to maintain attentive presence of awareness in all circumstances in order to apply all the aspects of moral discipline aimed at not harming others and acting for their good. Needless to add, this principle forms an extremely important basis of the behaviour of Samantabhadra of Ati.

3. THE WAY TO TAKE REFUGE

Refuge is an element of fundamental importance basic to all the paths, whether of the Common Causal Vehicle or of the special vehicles of transformation of Tantra and of self-liberation of Dzogchen Ati. Perfectly understanding its characteristics, it is necessary to strive to succeed in integrating its authentic principle within us.

There is a very clear and complete explanation of the fundamental principle of Refuge in the advice given by the great teacher of Oddiyana to his consort Yeshe Tsogyal. In *Guru Padma's Advice in the Form of Questions and Answers (Slob dpon pad ma'i zhal gdams zhu lan)* he says (op. 33, A: p. 256, 6; B: p. 20, 3):

> ⌘ The nirmanakaya teacher said: "Tsogyal! The base of all the dharmas is Refuge. The support of all the dharmas consists in the Three Supreme Jewels. The means to extinguish birth and death is Refuge together with its subsidiary aspects."
> The venerable lady asked: "What is the essence of taking Refuge? What is its literal meaning? Into how many categories is it subdivided?"
> The teacher answered: "The essence of taking Refuge is the aspiration to attain supreme enlightenment, together with commitment to compassion.
> It is called Refuge because it releases from the terror of the three lower states and from wrong beliefs that attribute reality to the impermanent aggregate (which we call 'the individual'), like that of the Mutegpas.
> There are three types of Refuge: outer Refuge, inner Refuge, and secret Refuge." ⌘

3.1. Outer Refuge

And (op. 33, A: p. 257, 5; B: p. 21, 3):

> ⌘ The venerable lady asked again: "What are the causes that determine the outer Refuge? In what object should one take Ref-

uge? What type of person can take Refuge? In what way, or on the basis of what method? With what kind of motivation?" Guru Padma replied: "There are three causes for taking Refuge: fear of the suffering of samsara, faith in the Three Supreme Jewels as the place of Refuge, and the recognition of the Three Jewels as the object of Refuge."⌘

Furthermore (op. 33, A: p. 258, 3; B: p. 22, 3):

⌘ In what object should one take Refuge? In the Three Jewels. Which, in fact, is the only means able to bring about the cessation of birth and death? As the omniscient Buddha has purified all defects and perfected all the qualities, the only way to end birth and death for oneself and for others consists in his teaching and the community of those that maintain it. It being the only object of Refuge, we take Refuge in it. ⌘

And (op. 33, A: p. 259, 1; B: p. 22, 7):

⌘ A person who takes Refuge must have the three required qualities of aspiration, devotion and faith and must remember the qualities of the Three Jewels. Furthermore he or she must proceed on the basis of three specific intentions, which are:

Samsara being beginningless and endless, from now on I will strive (to overcome it).
I will not take Refuge in (worldly) deities such as those of the Mutegpas etc.
I recognise the (state of the) omniscient Buddha as my sole and supreme Refuge.

This is sufficient to determine a 'common' Refuge. ⌘

And (op. 33, A: p. 259, 5; B: p. 23, 4):

⌘ Which is the way or method to take Refuge? It must be based on devotion through body, voice and mind: with fear of the three

lower states and of samsara, trusting in the power of the Three Jewels and having stable faith and compassion. ⌘

And (op. 33, A: p. 260, 1; B: p. 23, 6):

⌘ With which type of intention must one take Refuge? It is necessary to take the commitment to act for the benefit of beings inasmuch as it is impossible to attain total enlightenment wishing only to relinquish samsara and to obtain the fruit of nirvana (for oneself). Therefore you should take Refuge thinking: "To liberate all beings from the suffering of samsara, I and all the beings of the three worlds take Refuge until we have realised the essence of bodhi". ⌘

3.2. Inner Refuge

And (op. 33, A: p. 273, 4; B: p. 35, 3):

⌘ Again the venerable consort Kharchen Tsogyal asked the nirmanakaya Guru Padmasambhava: "With regard to the inner way of taking Refuge, in what object should one take Refuge? What type of person can take Refuge? In what way and on the basis of which method? With which type of intention? For how long? Thanks to which secondary cause? And what are its specific aims and benefits?"
The teacher replied: "The object in which to take Refuge comprises the Teacher, the Yidams and the Dakinis.
The person must have entered on the path of Secret Mantra.
The way to take Refuge must be based on respect and on devotion through body, voice and mind.
There are three specific intentions: to see your teacher as Buddha; never to forsake the Yidam, not even at the cost of your life; always to worship the Dakinis.
With regard to the duration, you must take Refuge from the moment you receive the Bodhichitta commitment during the initiation until accomplishment of the level of Vajra Holder[72].

[72] In Tibetan *rdo rje 'dzin pa'i sa*, the supreme level of realisation in Vajrayāna.

The secondary cause is the birth of respect and devotion towards Secret Mantra.
As for its aim and benefits, refuge enables you to become suitable to the teachings of Secret Mantra and to receive its particular empowering flow."⌘

3.3. Secret Refuge

And (op. 33, A: p. 277, 5; B: p. 39, 3):

⌘ The venerable lady asked the Guru: "As regard the secret way of taking Refuge, in what object should one take Refuge? What type of person can take Refuge? In what way or on the basis of which method? With which type of intention? For how long? Thanks to which secondary cause? And what are its specific aims or benefits?"
The teacher replied: "The secret object in which to take Refuge comprises the view, meditation and behaviour.
The person should have the supreme capacity together with the aspiration to realise enlightenment.
With regard to the way to take Refuge, your base should be the view, meditation and behaviour, concerning which: the view must be founded on certainty; the meditation, on experience; and the behaviour, on the same taste (of non-dual integration).
With regard to the specific intentions, as the view you should not harbour any attachment or desire either to obtain enlightenment or to relinquish samsara.
As for the mode of the meditation, you should not have any conceptual notion (of a 'meditation') and you should not fall into limits, for no definition can exhaust its contents.
As for the mode of behaviour, one should not accept or reject anything, without ever falling into partiality.
As for its duration, you take Refuge until total enlightenment.
As for the secondary cause, you take Refuge with the wish not to be reborn.
With regard to its aim and benefits, it serves to obtain perfect enlightenment in this very life." ⌘

On the basis of these explanations one should understand precisely the meaning of the different characteristics of outer, inner and secret Refuge.

4. THE WAY TO PRACTISE REFUGE

ཨཿ A

At our heart, inside a sphere of five colours we visualise instantly a white and luminous letter A, the self-perfected manifestation of the dang energy[73] of the primordial state, (sounding A as if) the sound (were) inherent within it. At the same time we imagine that from the A infinite rays radiate, symbolising our intense devotion, and that they reach in all ten directions to kindle the wisdom of the ocean of teachers, Vidyadharas[74] and Enlightened Ones. We then invite the great teacher Padmasambhava, who appears in space before us in a pavilion of five coloured lights as if he was really present. He is adorned in the three secret seats with the three Vajra syllables OM AH HUM. In them all the empowering flow of the energy of the three states of the Body, Voice and Mind, first of our root teachers and then of all the Vidyadharas and Enlightened Ones, flow together indissolubly. In this way, as the merit field[75] he becomes 'the wish-fulfilling jewel that unifies all'[76], according to a special Dzogchen method, surrounded by an ocean of manifestations of Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha, by teachers of our lineage, Yidams in peaceful, joyous and wrathful forms, Pawos and

[73] The *gdangs* energy represents the primary aspect of manifestation of the primordial state, which albeit without colour or form takes on colour and form in conformity with secondary causes.

[74] The Vidyādharas (*rig 'dzin*) or 'knowledge holders' are beings who have achieved realisation by means of the path of Vajrayāna and in particular of rDzogs chen Atiyoga.

[75] The merit field (*tshogs zhing*), that is the source of all the accumulation of merit, designates the manifestation of the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha) and of the Three Roots (Guru, Deva, Ḍākinī) visualised by the practitioner.

[76] In Tibetan *bla ma kun 'dus yid bzhin nor bu.*

Dakinis, etc., like the gathering of masses of clouds. We are in front of them, together with all beings infinite as space who are our mothers, beginning with those with whom we have established a relationship, whether good or bad. With the wish to take Refuge all together, from now until we attain the essence of bodhi, we recite:

NAMO GURU BHYA

This is the most essential way to take Refuge, called 'that is enough for one hundred '. Or it is sufficient to recite

LAMALA CHABSU CHIO

that means: "I take refuge in the teacher"

Guru Padma's Advice in the Form of Questions and Answers states (op. 33, A: p. 184, 4):

⌘ The teacher said:

You should understand that the teacher is more important
Than the Buddhas of the thousand kalpas,
Because all the Buddhas of past kalpas
Have attained enlightenment by following a teacher.
Before the appearance of a teacher
Not even the name 'Buddha' existed.

And:

The teacher is Buddha, the teacher is the Dharma
And equally the teacher is the Sangha:
He is the root of the Three Jewels.
Even if you neglect any other offering
But honour the teacher perfectly,
Satisfying him, then all the siddhis you desire will manifest. ⌘

Although there is nothing lacking from this essential practice of Refuge, when you have the opportunity in terms of the specific circumstances of time and place you can practise the Refuge in a more comprehensive manner (in the following way).

On the basis of the teachings of the Vajra Essence of the Clear Light[77] the teacher, great Vajra Holder or Vajradhara, is the true 'jewel' of the Buddha. All the sambhogakaya manifestations in the form of peaceful, joyous and wrathful Yidams transmitted by Vajradhara as the particular method of the profound way (of transformation) are the true 'jewel' of the Dharma. The Dakinis, owners of the secret teachings, and the guardians are the true 'jewel' of the Sangha that helps you to practise the swift way (of realisation). The category of 'jewel' of the Sangha also embraces the Pawos and Pamos, Vajra brothers and sisters, bound by the Vajra samaya oath. On the basis of this principle we take Refuge reciting:

NAMO GURU BHYA
NAMO DEVA BHYA
NAMO DHAKINI BHYA

If you want to devote more time to this you can recite the following lines by Longchenpa, known as the 'two-limbed Refuge' because they combine the visualisation of the infinite merit field of Refuge and the taking of Refuge in it.

I and all beings respectfully take refuge
In the Teacher, Yidams, Pawos and Dakinis,
In Buddha, Dharma, and the noble Sangha
Filling the whole sky.

We recite these lines three, five, seven or more times at the beginning of each practice session, taking Refuge with a feeling of intense devotion.

[77] In Tibetan *'od gsal rdo rje'i snying po*, an expression referring mainly to the rDzogs chen teaching as the essence of Vajrayāna.

Yeshe Tsogyal

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CULTIVATION OF SUPREME BODHICHITTA

For a practitioner, the authentic principle of the cultivation of Bodhichitta consists in turning your mind within to ascertain what your intention or aspiration is. If you discover that you have bad thoughts conditioned by a strongly selfish motivation you should disclose it and become mindful of your condition. At this point, acknowledging that these bad thoughts can become the cause of negative actions you should let them dissolve in their dimension, giving birth in their place to good thoughts tied to the altruistic principle of supreme Bodhichitta. This, in substance, is the foundation or essence of the cultivation of Bodhichitta.

As well as comprising the essence of the cultivation of Bodhichitta this principle also constitutes the crucial point of Mahayana practice. Thus it is extremely important for understanding of this essential way to cultivate supreme Bodhichitta really to arise and to become stable within us.

1. THE THREE WAYS TO CULTIVATE BODHICHITTA

There are three ways to cultivate the altruistic aspiration to supreme Bodhichitta: Bodhichitta like a king, Bodhichitta like a ferryman, Bodhichitta like a shepherd[78].

'Bodhichitta like a king' means the wish to help all beings but only after having first attained liberation oneself.

'Bodhichitta like a ferryman', on the other hand, is the wish for oneself and all others to attain liberation together.

[78] In Tibetan *rgyal po lta bu'i sems bskyed, mnyan pa lta bu'i sems bskyed, rdzi bo lta bu'i sems bskyed.*

'Bodhichitta like a shepherd', finally, is the wish that others attain liberation first.

2. THE TWO SUBDIVISIONS OF BODHICHITTA

Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct by Shantideva says (op. 17: p. 5, 15):

⌘ Just as there is a difference
Between the wish to travel and actually travelling,
The wise must distinguish
Between the two different levels (of Bodhichitta). ⌘

There are in fact two ways to enact Bodhichitta, respectively of intention and in action[79]. 'Bodhichitta of intention', linked to meditation on the Four Immeasurables, is based on aspiration similar to that of a person who wants to travel in a country. 'Bodhichitta in action' on the other hand consists in carrying out the true conduct of a Bodhisattva, through gradual training in the Paramitas or 'perfections' that will be explained below. Thus whoever cultivates this is comparable to a person who, after having planned a journey, succeeds finally in setting off. By means of the two Bodhichittas, of intention and in action, you should train with great zeal to enable pure Bodhichitta to arise within you.

3. THE TWO TYPES OF BODHICHITTA

Cultivating both types of Bodhichitta, of intention and in action, practised in the Bodhisattva vehicle during the 'path of accumulation' and the 'path of application', pertain to what is called 'relative Bodhichitta'.

[79] In Tibetan *smon pa sems bskyed* and *'jug pa sems bskyed.*

Training at length in this Bodhichitta you finally reach the 'path of seeing'[80] which enables real understanding of emptiness, the wisdom beyond all conceptual limits, as the true condition of all phenomena to arise: this realisation is called 'absolute Bodhichitta'. Its meaning is closely tied to the explanation given in Dzogchen of 'essence-Bodhichitta' as the authentic condition of the primordial base or of the natural state which has the three wisdoms of essence, nature and potentiality of energy.

4. THE WAY TO CULTIVATE RELATIVE BODHICHITTA

According to the System of Vast Behaviour (*rgya chen spyod pa'i lugs*), it is indispensable to undertake the relative Bodhichitta commitment in a specific ceremony. Said to have been founded by (Buddha) Maitreya, it probably arose in conformity with the tradition of the Pratimoksha vows of the Hinayana, the greater part of which must be conferred by a teacher in a ritual.

However there is also a tradition in which it is possible to take the Bodhichitta commitment without having to depend on a ritual. This is known as the System of the Profound View (*zab mo lta ba'i lugs*) and is attributed to the teacher Nagarjuna. According to the celebrated lines in *The Pure Dimension of Manjushri ('Jam dpal zhing bkod)*:

All dharmas are secondary causes
And depend entirely on one's intention.

[80] The five paths (*lam lnga*) of Mahāyāna are: 1. the path of accumulation (*tshogs lam*), 2. the path of application (*sbyor lam*), 3. the path of seeing (*mthong lam*), 4. the path of meditation (*sgom lam*), 5. the path of no more learning (*mi slob lam*). Regarding the relation between the ways of cultivating *bodhicitta* and the levels of realisation of Mahāyāna, the *Thar lam gsal sgron* by A 'dzam 'brug pa explains that (op. 12: pp. 229ff) on the paths of accumulation and of application one speaks of '*bodhicitta* based on aspiration', from the first to the seventh *bhūmi* one speaks of '*bodhicitta* of pure intention', on the three pure *bhūmis* (eighth, ninth and tenth) one speaks of 'completely ripened *bodhicitta*', at the level of enlightenment one speaks of '*bodhicitta* beyond all obstacles'.

It is thus easy to see that this system is in full accord with the basic principle of all the Mahayana training methods, which is that everything depends on the intention of the individual.

4.1. The way to take the relative Bodhichitta commitment by oneself

This is the way to take the relative Bodhichitta commitment by oneself.

In space before you, as witness to your pledge, visualise the same 'merit field' as in the Refuge, taking Refuge before it together with all the infinite sentient beings from now until you attain the essence of enlightenment. Then, with the wish to cultivate the aspiration to supreme Bodhichitta recite the following verses from the *Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct* (op. 17: p. 13, 3):

⌘ Until I reach the essence of bodhi
I take Refuge in Buddha,
Likewise I take refuge in the Dharma
And in the Sangha of Bodhisattvas. ⌘

And then (op. 17: p. 22, 2):

⌘ Just as the Tathagatas of the past
Generated the altruistic Bodhichitta aspiration
Training gradually
In the practices of the Bodhisattvas,
I too, for the benefit of beings
Generate the altruistic Bodhichitta aspiration
And will train gradually
In the same way in the practices (of the Bodhisattvas). ⌘

Concentrating on their meaning, we recite these verses to communicate with those whom we have invited as witnesses. This is the way we should cultivate relative Bodhichitta.

4.2. Meditation on one's own contentment

After having undertaken the relative Bodhichitta commitment, meditate on your own contentment with the following lines (op. 17: p. 22, 8):

⌘ This time my life has revealed itself to be fruitful:
I have obtained a perfect human birth.
Today I have been born into the family of the Buddhas,
I have become an offspring of the Buddhas (a Bodhisattva).
From now on, at whatever cost,
I will always behave in accord with my lineage:
I will never stain in any way
This pure and virtuous lineage. ⌘

We recite these verses properly concentrating on their meaning.

4.3. Meditation on others' contentment

Then meditate on the contentment of others, pronouncing (op. 17: p. 23, 10):

⌘ Today, in front of all the protectors,
I invite all beings
To the state of final realisation
And to the pleasure of provisional happiness:
May the Devas, the Asuras and all others rejoice in this![81] ⌘

In this way, making others, too, happy by means of the meaning of these verses, we should engage with diligence really to give birth within us to the supreme aspiration of Bodhichitta.

[81] Here this means the Devas and Asuras tied to the positive force, such as the seventy-five Mahākalas of the pure dimensions, emanations of neutral (*ma ning*) Mahākala. (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu)

4.4. The essential way to practise the cultivation of relative Bodhichitta

In order for an authentic altruistic aspiration to arise within through the cultivation of relative Bodhichitta, and in order for it never to wane but on the contrary to develop through the essential practice of Dzogchen, as a secondary factor in your daily practice you can recite the following verses, originally contained in the Anuyoga text *Teaching for the Yogin's Realization (rNal 'byor grub pa'i lung)* and used by the teacher Longchenpa to express in essence the foundation of Bodhichitta commitment:

⌘ I and all sentient beings
Are enlightened from the beginning:
Recognising this condition
I cultivate supreme Bodhichitta. ⌘

We should recite these verses at the beginning of every practice session fervently training our mind to really integrate their meaning within, mindful of the specific concentration to associate with the cultivation of Bodhichitta.

5. TRAINING IN THE BODHICHITTA OF INTENTION: THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES[82]

Training in the Bodhichitta of intention consists mainly in engaging with diligence to enable our mind to become deeply familiar with the true sense of the Four Immeasurables that are: immeasurable loving kindness, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable altruistic joy, immeasurable equanimity. As is written in this regard in *The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation* by Adzam Drugpa (op. 12: p. 213, 5):

[82] The section on the Four Immeasurables is based on the *Thar lam gsal sgron* by A 'dzam 'brug pa (op. 12: pp. 213ff).

⌘ In general one speaks of 'loving kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity,' so that loving kindness comes first. However when you practise if you do not train first of all in immeasurable equanimity there is the danger that your loving kindness and compassion might fall into partiality. This is why it is necessary to train in equanimity first of all. ⌘

Thus, on the basis of this pronouncement it is necessary to undertake training in the Four Immeasurables starting with equanimity.

5.1. Immeasurable equanimity

The true sense of immeasurable equanimity is based on the intention and aspiration to quell both attachment and aversion. In fact, as not one among all sentient beings as infinite as space has not been our father or mother in other lives we should aspire to consider all beings in an equal manner, without falling into attachment towards our friends, hatred towards our enemies and ignorant unconcern towards those to whom we are indifferent. With this resolve, we first choose as our object of meditation someone we do not like or who gives rise to feelings of hatred within us. We think that in past lives this person has been one of our parents, a friend and then an enemy etc., many times over. Moreover, since the illusory vision in which we are now living is impermanent and changes moment by moment, if we reflect on it correctly, the bad this person has done to us during the brief time of this life is something for which we should be grateful.

Jigmed Lingpa said (quoted in op. 12: p. 214, 6):

⌘ The bad enemies do us is a means to develop our capacity for practice,
And unjust accusations serve to bolster our training in virtue.
As all of this is a teacher that demolishes our attachments,
We should be infinitely grateful for this. ⌘

Thus we should train our mind until that person becomes just like anyone else towards whom we have no particular feelings.

As far as the neutral way we may feel towards those whom we do not feel to be either enemies or friends, we should understand that this is only indifference induced by ignorance and certainly cannot suffice as immeasurable equanimity. This latter, in fact, must be like that of a Rishi who, when offering a banquet, gives to everyone indiscriminately. In the same way we should train repeatedly in equanimity towards all beings as infinite as space, totally disregarding limits of distance and the dualism of attachment and hatred.

5.2. Immeasurable loving kindness

The true sense of immeasurable loving kindness is based on the intention and aspiration that all beings, without any distinction, should have happiness and never be separated from it. In general this is also called 'total loving kindness'

Just as parents, for instance, patiently put up with any misdeeds done by their ungrateful children and without becoming discouraged constantly engage in striving for their health and happiness, we should take the commitment to liberate all beings from the ocean of suffering of samsara, acting directly or indirectly, and to behave in such a way that in this and in future lives they might always find themselves in favourable circumstances.

The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation states (op. 12: p. 217, 2):

> ꕥ In general all beings wish for happiness and do not want suffering, however due to delusion they act so as to obtain suffering instead of happiness. How I wish that the desires of all beings might be realised and that all could know only happiness!
> We meditate repeatedly on this and train our mind until hearing of someone's happiness makes us content as if it were our own happiness. In fact a sutra says:

Loving kindness expressed with the body,
Loving kindness expressed with the voice,
Loving kindness expressed with the mind.

Thus in all actions of body, voice and mind we should train in the feeling of loving kindness, avoiding causing even the slightest disturbance to others. According to *Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct (sPyod 'jug)*:

When we look at sentient beings
We should think: "It is just thanks to them
That I will attain enlightenment."
So look at them with allegiance and with love.

In fact, when we look at someone we should do so smiling kindly and not with a surly or angry mien. With our voice we should avoid despising, offending or criticising, unless it is absolutely necessary, and should abstain from the four non-virtuous actions of the voice. With our mind we should relinquish malevolence and resolve to help others, without expecting anything in return and without falling into the deceitful demeanour of wanting to impress others. From the bottom of our heart we should diligently cultivate the attitude of wanting to help others. ⌘

Immeasurable loving kindness must be like the love with which a mother bird cares for her brood of nestlings. First of all she makes a soft nest, then protects the eggs with her wings, hatching them with the heat of her body, then, with love and sweetness in her every act she looks after the little birds until they, having learned to fly, are able to leave the nest. In the same way, to really acquire immeasurable loving kindness we must train thinking: "Until all beings of the three worlds are liberated from the ocean of transmigration I will strive in every way to act for their happiness!"

The true sense of immeasurable compassion is based on the intention or wish for all beings to be free of suffering. In general this is also called 'total compassion'.

Let us think of someone afflicted by suffering, such as a criminal in prison awaiting execution or an animal at the butcher's about to be slaughtered. Then we identify with that person, thinking: "What can I do now? I have nowhere to run or hide, I have neither refuge nor saviour!" Thereby taking on their suffering until we feel fear.

Then we identify that person with our mother or father, who cared for us with such love, thinking: "Even though my mother (or my father) has done nothing wrong, she now finds herself facing a suffering that will deprive her of her life. With no place to run to, to hide or to save herself, with nobody to protect her, she is imprisoned in a cage of pain and in an instant will leave this life and this body that she has loved so much, obliged to take another birth. Alas! Who knows how much she is suffering! How I wish I could do something to liberate her from the pain she is feeling!"

Training in this way a feeling of compassion will arise in us so intense that it will be difficult to bear, and at this point we should relax in a condition beyond concepts.

We then train in thinking of those who are now our enemies and finally of those towards whom we are indifferent: among these too there is not one who has not been our parent in other lives. Therefore, reflecting that many of them are undergoing the unbearable suffering of the three lower states and that many others are committing actions which will only cause them further suffering we will understand how they too are like a convict in prison or an animal in the hands of its butcher, and we will feel compassion.

Then we formulate the thought: "How I wish that on my own I could free all these suffering beings from their karmic suffering and swiftly lead them to the state of enlightenment! Teacher and Three Jewels, enable me to attain this capacity!" We should express this aspiration from the bottom of our heart.

In this way, training our mind in a feeling of total compassion such as a mother without arms would feel seeing her own child dragged away by the current of a river, we will arouse a genuine change in our heart and feeling an unbearable compassion arise in us we should think: "I do not have the capacity to release others from suffering. What can I do? I ask to be empowered so that I might swiftly attain the energy of compassion and the empowering flow to enable me on my own to release all beings from the ocean of suffering!"

When in this way immeasurable compassion has arisen we should relax in a state of equanimous contemplation, recognising the unreality of ourselves and of others, just like a dream or a magic illusion. We must train in all this with great commitment.

5.4. Immeasurable joy

The true sense of immeasurable joy is based on the intention or wish to quell every type of jealousy or competitiveness in relation to others.

To begin we choose a relatively easy object of meditation: a person who is close to us or a friend etc., who for reasons of birth, wealth and power stands above others, and we think: "How happy I would be if her prosperity and prestige would increase even more, together with her intelligence and fame, and if she was always sheltered from disturbances caused by others! If only this would truly come to be!"

We should train our mind expressing this wish. In the same way we then train in concentrating our thoughts on persons towards whom we feel indifferent, and finally we meditate on the enemies we hate most and on those whom we envy most.

The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation says (op. 12: p. 226, 4):

> ཐ In brief, we must really rid ourselves of bad mental attitudes based on competition and jealousy that make others' well-being and prosperity unbearable for us. The essence of Bodhisattva practice aims only at producing the cause and the fruit of the happiness, both provisional and definitive, of all sentient beings.

So what in the world is worse than not being content about others' happiness and prosperity? So we should always be content, from the bottom of our heart, about the good qualities and positive circumstances of others. ⌘

We should engage in this way with great commitment until a feeling of immeasurable joy arises in us, like that of a camel when it finds its lost child[83]. At this point we should relax in a state of equanimous contemplation beyond any concept.

We should devote five, three or at least one day of practice to each of the Four Immeasurables: this factor is extremely important for the Base of Santi Maha Sangha. In fact, as Jigmed Lingpa said (quoted in op. 12: p. 228, 2):

⌘ If thoughts are good, the levels of realisation and the paths are good.
If thoughts are bad, the levels of realisation and the paths are bad.
As everything depends on thoughts
We should always train in good thoughts. ⌘

5.5. The way to train one's mind in the Four Immeasurables

As a daily practice, to keep alive the mind training in the Four Immeasurables we can use the following verses:

May all beings have happiness and the cause of happiness!
May all beings be free of suffering and the cause of suffering!
May all beings never be separated from the happiness that is free of suffering!
May all beings abide in immeasurable equanimity, beyond the limits of distance and of attachment and aversion!

[83] This example derives from the traditional belief that the camel is the animal that loves its offspring the most.

Training our mind thoroughly in order to succeed in integrating their meaning within us, we recite these lines, mindful of the specific concentration to associate with the Four Immeasurables.

6. TRAINING IN THE BODHICHITTA IN ACTION: THE SIX PARAMITAS[84]

Training in the Bodhichitta in action consists mainly in training gradually in the six Paramitas or 'perfections'. Among these, five correspond to the aspect of method: generosity, morality, patience, perseverance, and meditative concentration. The sixth is the Paramita of prajña or perfection of discriminating wisdom and corresponds to the aspect of the accumulation of wisdom. After having first understood well their basic principles and their subdivisions we should put them into practice in order to integrate their fundamental sense within ourselves.

6.1. The Paramita of generosity

The Paramita of generosity or Danaparamita comprises three subdivisions: the gift of material things; the gift of the teaching; the gift of release from fear.

6.1.1. The gift of material things

The gift of material things is in turn subdivided into three types: offering, great offering, and supreme offering[85].

'Offering' means to offer material things within one's possibilities without attachment or greed and without expecting any recompense or

[84] The section on the six *pāramitās* is mainly based on the *Thar lam gsal sgron* by A 'dzam 'brug pa (op. 12: pp. 239ff).

[85] In Tibetan *gtong ba, gtong ba chen po, shin tu gtong ba* respectively.

a good karmic result, on the basis of the wish to give all that we have for the benefit of others.

'Great offering' is exemplified by prince Lokeshwara who gave away all the riches contained in the treasury of his father the king and even his own son.

'Supreme offering' means a gesture of total offering, such as that of Buddha who in a previous incarnation as Bodhisattva Tagmo Lüjin offered his own body to a hungry tiger.

This last offering, however, cannot be carried out by ordinary people but only by those who have reached one of the Bodhisattva levels. It is very important for us practitioners on the path to train in integrating as much as possible within ourselves the principle of offering by making offerings to the Buddhas and to other sacred objects of veneration and by practising generosity towards all those who are in need.

6.1.2. The gift of the teaching

The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation states (op. 12: p. 241, 4):

> ⌘ 'Gift of the teaching' means bestowing initiations, transmitting teachings and so on. However, someone at the level of 'conduct of aspiration'[86], who has not completely extinguished selfish desire, can only appear to help others. In fact in such a case it is said that such a person's capacity of empowerment is like a vase which empties when pouring its contents into another vase. And his or her teachings are compared to a lamp passed outside from a dark room: as soon as it lights up the person outside it leaves (the person inside) in the dark. From this and other examples we can understand that in this way we accumulate only negativity and obstacles.
>
> On the other hand, when a person teaches after having reached a

[86] In Tibetan *mos pa spyod pa'i gang zag*: a practitioner of the first or the second of the five paths of Mahāyāna.

level of realisation sufficient to have disciples or because he or she has received the order or permission from their own teacher, his or her capacity of empowerment is said to be like the contents of a vase (that is miraculous) because even though it helps others to ripen it does not diminish. His or her teachings are instead compared to a lamp that even though it illuminates others never remains in the dark itself. Therefore what beginners should engage in, always on the basis of the 'three sacred foundations', are the practices of visualising the water offering[87] or the gift of one's body etc. followed by the gift of the teaching, using the verses of Buddha: "Do not commit negative actions etc."[88]. After having practised in this way, visualising the gift of material things and the gift of the teaching, we should pronounce the aspiration or wish to become capable one day of actually offering such gifts. ⌘

As we have read in this passage by Adzam Drugpa, this is the correct way to apply the offering of the teaching.

6.1.3. The gift of release from fear

The gift of release from fear consists in, directly or indirectly, protecting defenceless beings and saving animals whose life is in danger, such as by rescuing animals from the slaughterhouse or domestic birds and fish etc. sold in the market. In brief, according to our capacity we should take the responsibility to help beings made anxious by fear.

[87] In Tibetan *chu gtor*: a rite mainly consisting of water offerings above all to the Preta and other guests. This rite, in which the water and the *gtor ma* are authenticated by means of *mantras*, *mudrās* and visualisation and then offered, is called *chu gtor* due to the combination of the terms *chu sbyin* (water offering) and *gtor ma* (O.N.)

[88] See Chapter Seven: 3.1.

6.1.4. The way to practise the essence of generosity

On the basis of the instructions on Chöd as practised in the Dzogchen Community, we should practise as much as possible visualising offering our body mainly to the guest-beings that cause hindrances and with whom we have incurred a karmic debt[89]. Or, visualising all the beings that live in water and all the entities that cause obstacles and with whom we have incurred a karmic debt, we proffer the 'inexhaustible' water offering[90], empowering it simply with the essence of all mantras:

OM AH HUM

or with the mantra:

NAMAH SARVA TATHAGATA AVALOKITE
OM SAMBHARA SAMBHARA HUM

Or, concentrating mainly on the guest-beings that cause hindrances and with whom we have incurred a karmic debt and also the bardo beings, we can practise the burnt offering[91]. We should engage in all of this as much as possible, according to our means.

In conclusion, in all circumstances we should strive to be as generous as we can towards others, both in intention and in action.

[89] In Tibetan *lan chags*: debts incurred during previous lives.

[90] In order to practise the water offering in a simple way it is sufficient to offer water in a cup or, for example, to cast some water mixed with milk into a stream. (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu)

[91] In Tibetan *gsur bsngo*: the offering of the smoke from butter and barley flour (*rtsam pa*) burnt in fire, is mainly presented to Pretas, Dri za, *bar do* beings and entities that cause hindrances (*bgegs*) with whom we have incurred karmic debts. It can be practised using any simple text that describes this offering. Or, if one wants to perform it in an even simpler form, after having prepared the substances for burning one empowers them with the mantra OṂ ĀḤ HŪṂ, multiplies them as the 'sky treasure' with the mantra VAJRA SPARAṆA KHAM and then offers them to the guests using the same *mantra* and *mudrā* as the water offering. In conclusion one authenticates (the practice) by means of the dedication of merit and the invocation. This is sufficient. (O.N.)

Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct says (op. 17: p. 20, 7):

⌘ Our body, wealth
And all the virtues we have accumulated in the three times
We should offer without reservation
To achieve the benefit of all beings. ⌘

And furthermore (op. 17: p. 33, 6):

⌘ The Paramita of generosity is said
To consist in giving with a generous mind to all beings
All material things including the fruit:
Thus it is based on the mind. ⌘

And the commentary *The Drop of Nectar (sPyod 'jug tshig 'grel bdud rtsi'i thigs pa)* states (op. 19: p. 363, 1):

⌘ To all beings, important or less so, rich or poor, we should give our body, wealth and all the other material things we own together with the fruit (of this deed), that is without expecting a karmic recompense in this or in our next life, and without the avarice or attachment that hinder us from giving but instead with a mind that is generous or that has trained perfectly in generosity: this is called the Paramita of generosity. In fact it is said in (the sutra) *Inexhaustible Intelligence (Blo gros mi zad pa)*:

What is the paramita of generosity? Giving everything to others with a generous mind, including the fruit.

'Paramita' means being unwaveringly free of the conceptual consideration of the three factors (of the act: giver, gift, recipient), and this also applies to the others (Paramitas). Thus generosity does not depend on the worth of the offered gift but rather on one's mind being free of the attachment that hinder giving anything internal or external. Thus generosity consists in a generous mind and consequently derives from the mind. ⌘

6.2. The Paramita of morality

The Paramita of morality or Shilaparamita comprises three subdivisions: the morality of abstaining from negative behaviour; the morality of gathering virtue; the morality of acting for the benefit of beings.

6.2.1. The morality of abstaining from negative behaviour

The morality of abstaining from negative behaviour consists in reflecting on the grave outcome of violating moral conduct and consequently in shunning any negative physical, verbal or mental action as if it were a poison and in thoroughly controlling body, voice and mind.

6.2.2. The morality of gathering virtue

The morality of gathering virtue consists in the wish to engage in all the virtuous actions that correspond to the principles of vows or commitments which you have taken and in striving to maintain presence of awareness continuously in such a way as always to increase your accumulation of virtue.

6.2.3. The morality of acting for the benefit of others

The morality of acting for the benefit of others means, when all self-interest has been exhausted, helping others through the 'four attitudes that attract (disciples)'. However as this is difficult for beginners to apply it should be substituted with the commitment to stabilising the presence of the principle of the 'three sacred foundations' in any practice we perform.

Concerning the meaning of the four attitudes that attract, *The Encyclopedia of Knowledge* by Jamgön Kongtrul says (op. 32, vol. 2: p. 126, 14):

⌘ When one's mind has ripened (through morality) that gathers virtue one should engage in morality that acts for the benefit of others by means of the 'four attitudes that attract' which are: giving; speaking kindly; adapting to disciples' conditions; acting congruently. In order to attract those who have not yet entered (the teaching) first of all one seeks to satisfy them with material offerings: this is the first. Once they have entered (the teaching) speaking kindly one transmits the teaching to them and leads them gradually to awaken interest and enthusiasm for practice: this is the second. Just as we first nourish a small child with light food and only later with heavier foods, if one does not succeed in ripening (disciples) through a single teaching then one gets them to engage in teachings befitting their capacity: this is the third. Finally, in order to lead disciples to the sacred Dharma and virtuous conduct, one acts in a manner that is congruent (with what one teaches): this is the fourth. ⌘

6.2.4. The way to practise the essence of morality

Concerning the way to practise the essence of morality, *Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct* states (op. 17: p. 32, 1):

⌘ Those who wish to cultivate the (threefold) training
Must tend their mind with great attention:
Without tending the mind
It is impossible to cultivate the training. ⌘

Thus, in conclusion, always on the basis of presence and on awareness we should integrate within the true principle of morality, that consists in relinquishing harming others and conversely in being willing to help them, knowing judiciously what to implement or to avoid and the right way to do it. In this way, always observing body, voice and mind, whenever a thought arises that impels us not to perform virtuous actions but on the contrary to act non-virtuously we need to recognise it and to engage attentively in the virtues, mindful of their qualities and

benefits. At the same time we should completely eliminate non-virtuous tendencies, mindful of their faults and negative qualities[92].

6.3. The Paramita of patience

The Paramita of patience or Kshantiparamita comprises three subdivisions: the patience of enduring the bad received in exchange for good; the patience to bear hardships for the teaching; the patience of not becoming afraid when faced with the profound meaning.

6.3.1. The patience of enduring the bad received in exchange for good

This first type of patience consists in bearing in general the disturbances, insults, hidden criticism etc. and other types of wrongs done by others and in particular the bad that comes to us in exchange for the good we have done. In all these cases, mindful of the negative consequences of anger and of the benefits of patience, we should engage diligently in cultivating patience.

In fact, according to *The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation* (op. 12: p. 244, 5):

⌘ *Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct (sPyod 'jug)* states:

All good deeds
Such as acts of generosity, offerings to the Buddhas and so on
Accumulated for a thousand kalpas
Are destroyed by a single instant of anger.

[92] This means that the main thing is not following rules but instead relying on presence based on continuous self-observation in order to discern the positive or negative consequences of deeds one is performing at any particular moment. (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu)

So, mindful of the negative qualities of anger and on the basis of presence and of awareness we should always train in becoming perfect in abstaining from negative action, even in its most insignificant aspects. If we beginners, who are as irascible as newborn snakes, do not have the capacity to cultivate patience in a perfect way then first of all we must practise it, trying in every way possible not to get angry. In fact, the same text (*sPyod 'jug*) says:

There is no negative deed equal to anger,
There is no asceticism equal to patience.
So we should cultivate
Patience in every way with diligence.

The Mahayana sutras state that accumulating a single instant of anger is much worse than a hundred deeds of attachment. In fact, the virtues accumulated in many past lives are like a bundle of dry wood that anger, like a blaze, can burn in an instant. Conversely, patience is an ornament for provisional and definitive (happiness) and is the best of qualities. So, distinguishing well between our benefit and our ruin we should cultivate (patience) with great diligence. Pondering all this we should undertake this commitment with all our heart and practise maintaining presence and awareness in every moment and in every circumstance. ⌘

6.3.2. The patience to bear hardships for the teaching

The patience to bear hardships for the teaching means voluntarily bearing any hardship or privation with the aim of practising the sacred Dharma, completely relinquishing all the attachments of this life.

6.3.3. The patience of not becoming afraid when faced with the profound meaning

The last type of patience consists in training not to become afraid and not to hold wrong notions in regard of truths such as that of pro-

found emptiness or shunyata and of the principle that transcends cause and effect, good and bad, etc., as explained in the *Twelve Vajra Laughs*[93], in *The Eight Words of Marvel*[94] etc. found in the Dzogchen Ati tantras. On the contrary, we should have respect and devotion towards these teachings and express the wish to succeed one day in understanding their profound principle.

6.3.4. The way to practise the essence of patience

Regarding the way to practise the essence of patience, *Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct* says (op. 17: p. 33, 11):

⌘ Evil beings are (infinite) like space
And it is impossible to subdue them all:
However just subduing our own anger
Is like conquering all enemies. ⌘

Thus we must (learn to) accept suffering in three ways: regarding it as a broom that sweeps away hindrances caused by negative deeds; knowing it is something that enjoins us to virtue; recognising it as an ornament of the mind. There are also three ways, furthermore, to cultivate patience: regarding those who disturb us as the object of our com-

[93] *The Twelve Vajra Laughs* (*rdo rje'i gad mo bcu gnyis*) are twelve aphorisms found in the Upadeśa section of rDzogs chen. To give an example, the *Heap of Jewels tantra* (*Rin chen spungs pa*; op. 30: p. 86, 5) says: "Listen, *vajra* essence of the Voice of all the Buddhas! Observe self-arising wisdom: it is beyond virtue and vice and transcends view and meditation - marvellous! The condition of the base has never moved, so no good or bad result ensues from any action performed with body and voice: ha ha!" (O.N.)

[94] *The Eight Words of Marvel* (*ngo mtshar ba'i tshig brgyad*) too are found in the Upadeśa section of rDzogs chen. From the *Heap of Jewels tantra* (*Rin chen spungs pa*; op. 30: p. 109, 3): "Marvellous! Listen, you *vajra* essence of the Voice! As one's *rig pa* is beyond birth and death, there is not the slightest difference between someone who has murdered ten million beings and a practitioner who has always practised the ten *pāramitās*. This is said by me, Samantabhadra." (O.N.)

passion; recognising that the origin of all problems lies within us; understanding that all (adversities) are (like) a helping friend.

In this way we must train fervently and cultivate continuously the principle of patience until we have really acquired it within us.

6.4. The Paramita of perseverance

The Paramita of perseverance or Viryaparamita has three subdivisions: perseverance like armour; perseverance in application; the perseverance of never being satisfied.

6.4.1. Perseverance like armour

Perseverance like armour consists in following the example of teachers of the past who strove selflessly and willingly bore any hardship in order to study, reflect and meditate. So, without wasting any precious time by surrendering to laziness that derives from low self-esteem and dejection and through the stable presence of awareness we should engage fervently in whatever is necessary in the moment, formulating the thought: "If the emanations of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas had to bear hardships and persist with diligence, why shouldn't I?"

6.4.2. Perseverance in application

Engaging in perseverance means always being vividly mindful of the sense of the fleeting nature of time, without falling into the laziness which gives birth to the indifferent attitude of wanting to put off practising until tomorrow or the day after etc. So, developing great diligence we should engage opportunely in the practice we have to carry out, like a fearful person suddenly squeezed around the legs by a snake.

6.4.3. The perseverance of never being satisfied

This last type of perseverance consists in not immediately feeling self-satisfied as soon as you manage to engage a little in the practice of virtue. On the contrary you must totally relinquish all the meaningless distracting actions caused by laziness and attachment to bad deeds and developing great diligence engage in whatever is necessary in the moment.

The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation says (op. 12: p. 250, 1):

> ⌘ The Vidyadhara Jigmed Lingpa said: "Engaging in the practice of virtue with greater zeal the closer death approaches is the sign of a practitioner who is like a harvest unspoiled by frost." In fact, until we really attain enlightenment we will always have karma and latent traces to purify and ever more numerous qualities to acquire, so from the bottom of our heart we should never feel complacent about our practice. (Jigmed Lingpa) said: "No intelligence, wealth or power can release someone who has no perseverance, (who is) like the captain of a ship with no oars." Thus we need to moderate how much we eat, regulate how long we sleep and maintain the state of presence without being distracted, with a perseverance that is neither too rigid nor too relaxed, like drawing the string of a bow. Those who practise only sporadically when they find some free time will never get anywhere. ⌘

6.4.4. The way to practise the essence of perseverance

Regarding the way to practise the essence of perseverance, *Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct says* (op. 17: p. 67, 15):

> ⌘ With the boat of the human body
> Cross the great river of suffering!
> Since in future it will be difficult to regain this boat,
> This is not at all the time to fall asleep, you fool!⌘

Correctly training your mind in the meaning expressed in these verses, we must constantly spur alertness with the whip of presence and of the awareness of impermanence.

6.5. The Paramita of meditative stability: training in contemplation

The Paramita of meditative stability or Dhyanaparamita[95] comprises three subdivisions: the meditative stability of beginners; the meditative stability that discerns the real meaning; the supreme meditative stability of the Tathagatas.

6.5.1. The meditative stability of beginners

The 'meditative stability of beginners'[96] means the state where we have the experiences of pleasure, clarity and the absence of thought and, feeling attached to their taste, seek in every way to experience them again. Thus in this state we are attached to the taste of experiences.

Whatever extraordinary experience you may have, as practitioners you must recognise it as a mere experience and try fervently to overcome attachment to the taste of meditative stability.

6.5.2. The meditative stability that discerns the real meaning

The meditative stability that discerns the real meaning involves a state of meditation in which, even though we have overcome attach-

[95] The term *bsam gtan* or *dhyāna* is also translated as concentration, meditative absorption etc. In any case its basic meaning and aim is to make the mind stable in order to direct it easily towards any object of meditation. See also note 25.

[96] In Tibetan *byis nyer spyod kyi bsam gtan*: the term *byis pa*, here rendered as beginner, literally means 'child' and is generally used to designate those who have not yet attained the understanding of emptiness.

ment to the various types of experience and are no longer attached to the taste of meditative stability we nevertheless remain attached to the notion of emptiness as antidote.

Correctly recognising your attachment to the notion of emptiness as antidote on which your mind is one-pointedly concentrated, as a practitioner you should engage with diligence to overcome it and to liberate yourself from attachment to such an antidote.

6.5.3. The supreme meditative stability of the Tathagatas

When not only is there no longer any attachment to the taste of meditative stability but, having also overcome attachment to the notion of emptiness as antidote you find yourself in contemplation of the ultimate nature of phenomena utterly beyond thought, this is called 'the supreme meditative stability of the Tathagatas' This is the true essence of meditative stability and is also called 'contemplation' and is precisely that state that practitioners must seek to really integrate within. Thus it is necessary to engage with diligence in this type of meditative stability.

Furthermore, *The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation* says (op. 12: p. 254, 2):

> ⌘ Every time you practise meditative stability it is very important to apply the Vairochana position with seven characteristics, gazing in the prescribed way etc. In fact it is said:
>
> If the body is straight, the channels are straight.
> If the channels are straight, the prana is straight.
> If the prana is straight, the mind is straight.
>
> So, without reclining or leaning anywhere etc. keep your body erect, and without thinking of anything relax in equanimity in a condition of not grasping anything with concepts: this is the essence of Dhyanaparamita. ⌘

In all the sutra and tantra texts, as the practice of meditative stability in general the calm state meditation or Shine is taught. However, as various types of Semdzins that serve to give rise to the simultaneous experience of Shine and Lhagthong are described in the central part of this volume of the Base of Santi Maha Sangha in the section on 'meditation', for the moment I will refrain from treating Shine meditation[97]

6.5.3.1. Three secondary practices for developing meditative stability[98]

In order for meditative stability to arise correctly in us there are three secondary practices: meditation on the equality of self and others; meditation on exchanging self and others; meditation on cherishing others more than oneself.

6.5.3.1.1. The equality of oneself and others

Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct says (op. 17: p. 89, 2):

⌘ First of all we must engage with great commitment
In the equality of self and others.
As all are equal in relation to happiness and suffering
We should care for others as we do for ourselves. ⌘

So, recognising first of all that just as he or she wants happiness and does not want suffering so all beings have the same wish, the practitioner must seek to enable everyone to be happy and free of suffering,

[97] The practices of *zhi gnas* (*śamatha*) and *lhag mthong* (*vipaśyanā*) form the two pillars of Buddhist meditation. The main purpose of *zhi gnas* or 'abiding in the calm state' is to calm the mind and *prāṇa* energy in order to favour the experience of a state free of, or undisturbed by, thoughts. On the other hand *lhag mthong* or 'clear vision' has several meanings and aims according to the system of practice being pursued, however it refers in all cases to the intuitive and non-intellectual understanding of the true nature of phenomena.

[98] This tradition is based on the *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* by Śāntideva.

acting directly and indirectly. In this way, ridding ourselves completely of the negative mind set that causes the dualism of attachment to self and aversion to others, we practitioners must train our minds thoroughly to see ourselves and others on a plane of absolute equality, relaxing at the end of a practice session in the state of supreme meditative stability of the Tathagatas.

6.5.3.1.2. Exchanging oneself and others

Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct says (op. 17: p. 92, 7):

⌘ Just as the hands and other limbs
Are considered parts of the body,
Why should all beings having a body
Not be considered part of a single being?⌘

And (op. 17: p. 94, 11):

⌘ If we do not utterly exchange our happiness
With the suffering of others
We will never attain enlightenment
And even in samsara we will have no happiness. ⌘

In order to practise what is expressed in these verses, first of all we should have before us or visualise a being afflicted by pain. Exhaling we imagine offering them all our happiness and the merit we have accumulated; inhaling we imagine transferring and ripening within us all their suffering. We should meditate in this way, starting with a single person until gradually we come to include all infinite beings[99].

The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation says (op. 12: p. 236, 4):

⌘ With our voice we can also pronounce these words of power:

[99] This practice is generally known as *gtong len* (literally: giving and taking).

When I am happy, I offer all my merit to beings:
May benefits and happiness fill space!
When I suffer, I take on myself the suffering of all beings:
May I drain the ocean of suffering!

So, when we are at our ease, maintaining the presence of awareness we must use any sensation of pleasure or pain, however great or small, in our practice without succumbing to indifference. Conversely, when we feel a suffering such as an illness, hoping that this practice could help us and feigning to train our mind in this way is further confirmation of our ego and contrary to the right view: thus it is said that it cannot be of benefit. When we undergo unwanted suffering or an illness etc. we should instead practise formulating the thought: "There are many beings in the world suffering like me. Alas! May their lot fall on me and may they all be released from suffering and have happiness!" and meditate in this way from the bottom of our heart. When on the other hand we feel happiness or pleasure etc. we should think: "May this happiness and virtue of mine make all beings happy!" and meditate in this way. Thus the Bodhichitta of exchanging self and others is the ultimate and infallible essence of the practice for all those who have entered the way of Mahayana. So if it arises even only once in our mind it is able to purify obstacles and negative deeds accumulated over many kalpas, to enormously increase the accumulations of merit and of wisdom and to release us from the lower states and from the rebirths that could make us fall into them. ⌘

Regarding the way to practise the exchange of oneself and others, *Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct* says (op. 17: p. 92, 4):

⌘ Recognising all faults in ourselves
And an ocean of qualities in others
We must completely relinquish egoism
And care only for others. ⌘

And (op. 17: p. 95, 5):

⌘ Imagining inferior (superior or equal) persons in our place
And ourselves in the place of others,
With a mind free of other thoughts
We should meditate on jealousy, competitiveness and pride. ⌘

So, taking the position of persons inferior to us we train in observing the way the sensation of jealousy arises; exchanging ourselves with our equals, we observe the sensation of competitiveness; putting ourselves in the place of those superior to us, we observe the sensation of pride. At the end of the session we should relax our mind in the condition of the ultimate nature of phenomena beyond thought.

6.5.3.1.3. Cherishing others more than oneself

Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct says (op. 17: p. 94, 7):

⌘ All the happiness in the world
Comes from the wish for others' happiness.
All the suffering in the world
Comes from wishing for one's own happiness. ⌘

Training our mind thoroughly in the principle expounded in these verses, on the basis of wanting to forgo our own happiness as much as possible and conversely to act for the happiness of others, we should formulate the thought: "Even if I continue to transmigrate in samsara undergoing the suffering and torment of the lower states, I will bear it all. But what would I not give to see all beings happy! May all the suffering of others fall on me, and may all beings be happy by taking my happiness and thanks to the power of the merit I have accumulated!"

We should train in this way with diligence thinking this from the bottom of our heart, finally relaxing in the condition of equanimity beyond concepts.

As these secondary practices for meditative stability are extremely important for the Base of Santi Maha Sangha, practitioners should devote five, three or at least one day of practice to each of them in order to be able to achieve a concrete experience of them. So it is necessary to engage in these practices with diligence.

6.6. The Paramita of discriminating wisdom: training in prajña

The Paramita of discriminating wisdom or Prajñaparamita comprises three subdivisions: prajña derived from study; prajña derived from reflection; prajña derived from meditation.

6.6.1. Prajña derived from study

Prajña derived from study consists in listening judiciously to the vast and profound teachings from a sacred teacher and in clearly and precisely understanding their specific meanings. We should engage in this with diligence.

6.6.2. Prajña derived from reflection

The training in prajña derived from reflection consists in engaging with diligence, without remaining stuck at the level of words, until we have become capable of relating the understanding of all the diverse teachings we have received from a teacher to our own condition. It also consists in examining the meaning of their various contents by reasoning in order to make knowledge of them stable and to eliminate all possible doubts; and lastly, in being able to devote ourselves to practice in solitude without having to ask others for clarification. You must engage with diligence in this, too.

6.6.3. Prajña derived from meditation

The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation says (op. 12: p. 255, 2):

⌘ After having understood (all of this) put it into practice and by meditation recognise the true condition of the natural state. In fact, at first it is necessary to eliminate doubts by means of study and reflection and then, when engaging in meditation, to recognise that all outer phenomena tied to the five sense objects:
- albeit non-existent, they appear to our delusory perception, like a dream;
- manifest suddenly through the interdependence of primary and secondary causes, like a magic show;
- seem to exist even though they are non-existent, like an optical illusion;
- appear although unreal, like a mirage;
- even though there is nothing either inside or outside, they are perceived, like an echo;
- have neither an abode nor (contain) someone within, like a city of the Gandharvas[100];
- appear without having self-nature, like a reflected image;
- albeit non-existent, they may manifest in any manner, like a city conjured to appear by magic.
Recognising the unsubstantial (condition) of emptiness and form on the basis of these eight examples of illusoriness[101] we can understand that outer phenomena are false by their very nature. Then by examining the condition of our mind - the subject that perceives outer vision - even though the vision continues to appear the judging and grasping mind abates. Relaxing in the understanding of the space-like condition of emptiness and clarity of the ultimate nature is Prajñaparamita. ⌘

[100] The Gandharvas (Dri za) are immaterial sky beings that feed on smells, at times known as 'celestial musicians.'
[101] In Tibetan *sgyu ma'i dpe brgyad.*

6.6.4. Relative truth and absolute truth

Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct says (op. 17: p. 103, 3):

⌘ The relative and the absolute
Are called the two truths.
The absolute is not an object of the mind,
The mind is called the relative. ⌘

The commentary *The Drop of Nectar* states (op. 19: p. 621, 8):

⌘ This means that all the phenomena of samsara and nirvana, in their aspect of manifestation, constitute the relative truth while their real condition, the ultimate nature of emptiness, is the absolute truth. These two conditions, being true and unequivocal, are called the two truths. ⌘

And (op. 19: p. 621, 16):

⌘ The absolute or true condition of phenomena that transcends the four limits: existence, non-existence, existence and non-existence, neither existence nor non-existence, is not an object of knowledge by the mind because all concepts of affirmation, negation etc. and verbal explanations are called the relative and are not the absolute. So it is necessary to understand that the characteristic quality of the absolute truth is that it transcends mind, word, thought and explanation, while the characteristic quality of the relative truth is the deluded mind with its objects. In brief, (it should not be thought that) from the viewpoint of the ultimate condition there exists a division between being and non-being, attributing existence to the relative and non-existence to the absolute. In fact (in the *Heart Sutra: Prajñaparamitahridaya*) it is written:

Form is emptiness and emptiness itself is form. Beyond form there is no emptiness, beyond emptiness there is no form. ⌘

Thus the two truths are the relative truth and the absolute truth, and the ultimate principle of discriminating wisdom derived from meditation corresponds to the condition of the absolute truth. In order to realise this profound condition it is necessary to engage with diligence in the practice of the two 'absences of self-nature': the absence of self-nature in the person and the absence of self-nature in phenomena[102].

6.6.5. The absence of self-nature in the person

Let us think of what is called the 'individual', 'I' or 'sentient being', the agent of all good or bad actions and reaper of the fruits of their karmic results: is it made up of body, voice and mind or is it something separate from them? Is it eternal or impermanent? Is it inanimate material or consciousness? In this and many other ways we need to enquire and analyse until we discover that it is only due to the delusive mind that we take as 'I' something that is lacking in any identity whatsoever and likewise grasp the idea of 'others' even though there are no (other independent entities that can become the object of an 'I'). So, understanding conclusively that in reality there is no inherently existing 'I' or 'individual' we should kindle within us the understanding of the real condition devoid of independent being. We must engage in all this with diligence.

6.6.6. The absence of self-nature in phenomena: the four applications of presence

In order to gain understanding of the absence of self-nature in phenomena, the true absolute condition of all the countless phenomena based (on the dualism of) consciousness and object, etc., we must engage with diligence in the practice of exercising 'the four applications of presence': presence applied respectively to observation of the body, of sensations, of the mind, and of phenomena[103]

[102] The following sections are based on *Meditation Practices from the Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* (*sPyod 'jug sgom rim*) by dPal sprul rin po che (op. 18: pp. 536ff.)

[103] The practice of the four exercises of application of presence (*dran pa nyer bzhag*), based on Buddha's original teachings, constitutes the essence of *vipassana* or *vipaśyanā*

6.6.6.1. Presence applied to observation of the body

All the phenomena of the universe, of both samsara and nirvana, exist only as manifestations of our mind and have no real true existence. The mind, in its turn, depends on the body and is conditioned by it, so first of all we need to investigate the nature of our body.

Should we identify what is called 'the body' with the separate limbs of which it is composed or is it different from them? What is its origin? Where is it now? Where will it end up? And so on. Through such a thorough examining we finally discover that the body is lacking in self-existing nature and then relax in this understanding in a state of equanimous contemplation. We must engage in all this with diligence.

6.6.6.2. Presence applied to observation of sensations

All the sensations that we feel, whether of pleasure or pain, are the root of attachment, of aversion and of all the other disturbing emotions. So, (when a sensation arises) we examine it carefully: "Are the sensation and the mind that feels the sensation the same thing or two different things?" and so on (following the examples given above). We should engage in this exercise until we discover that sensation is lacking in self-nature, finally relaxing in a state of equanimous contemplation.

6.6.6.3. Presence applied to observation of the mind

Is the flow of the six aggregates of consciousness - the consciousnesses of sight, of sound, of smell, of taste, of touch, of the mind[104] -

(*lhag mthong*) meditation in Theravada Buddhism, where it is applied somewhat differently from the way described here. In any case the first three exercises address the three basic components of body, sensations and mental states, while the fourth addresses the phenomena that constitute the object of mind. See note 112 on the five *skandhas*.

[104] The six aggregates of consciousness (*rnam shes tshogs drug*) are subsumed within the *skandha* of consciousness (*vijñāna*). The first five are based on the sensory faculties, while the mental consciousness (*yid kyi rnam par shes pa*) serves to discriminate and judge objects. To these six the Cittamātra or Yogācāra school adds the consciousness contaminated by the passions (*nyon yid kyi rnam shes*), which impels acceptance

which first arise and subsequently give rise to manifold good and bad aspects[105] etc., the mind or something other than the mind? Are the various mental states that manifest as pleasure and distress, Dharma and non-Dharma[106], attachment and aversion, etc., (mind or) something different from mind? We should examine all this thoroughly. If they are only one thing why should one single mind appear in the different aspects of pleasure and pain, attachment and hatred, etc.? If instead we deem that all these mental states manifest only due to temporary secondary causes, what constitutes the essence of mind that does not depend on secondary causes and on contact with objects? Does it exist or not? Is it something eternal or impermanent? We need to engage in careful inquiry in this way until we conclusively understand that the mind has no basis or root whatsoever, finally relaxing in a state of equanimous contemplation.

6.6.6.4. Presence applied to observation of phenomena

(Now let us investigate) all the possible phenomena that are the object of consciousness not contained in the realms of body, sensations and mind but which pertain to the three aspects of perception, of mental formations or samskaras and of what does not pertain to the aggregates[107]. Because they too originate solely from the interdepend-

and rejection and hence the creation of *karma*, and the base consciousness (*kun gzhi'i rnam shes; ālaya vijñāna*), where the seeds of actions are accumulated, making eight consciousnesses (*rnam shes tshogs brgyad*) See also note 112 on the five *skandhas*.

[105] This means that, in the first moment contact with the sense objects occurs at the level of pure perception, while in the second moment the mental consciousness starts to function, which engenders judgement.

[106] In Tibetan *chos dang chos min*: what is deemed right or wrong according to the teaching.

[107] In general the *skandha* of perception (*saṃjñā*) comprises the objects of the six senses; the *skandha* of mental formations (*saṃskāra*) includes the fifty-one virtuous and non-virtuous mental states as well as some *saṃskāras* that are not conditioned by the act of cognition called *ldan min 'du byed*. According to the *Abhidharmakośa* the non-composite phenomena (*'dus ma byas*) that are the object of the mind (*chos kyi khams*) are two types of 'cessation' (*nirodha*) or states in which the function of the mind is blocked, and space. The Yogācāra or Cittamātra school adds the 'essential nature' (*tathatā*).

ence of primary and secondary causes we conclusively discover their condition of emptiness or the absence of any independent existence whatsoever, beyond all conceptual limits and devoid of any nature of reality whatsoever, finally relaxing in a state of equanimous contemplation. So, recognising the relative to be as a dream, we train in behaviour beyond attachment and aversion, and confident that in the absolute no phenomenon exists having even the slightest concrete reality we practise non-attachment in relation to anything. We must engage in all this with diligence[108].

Practitioners of this base level of Santi Maha Sangha should devote five, three or at least one day of practice to the examination of the absence of independent self-nature in the person and to each of the four applications of presence pertaining to the principle of the absence of independent self-nature of phenomena. In fact, it is very important for the experience of these fundamental methods related to the 'prajña derived from meditation' actually to arise within us[109].

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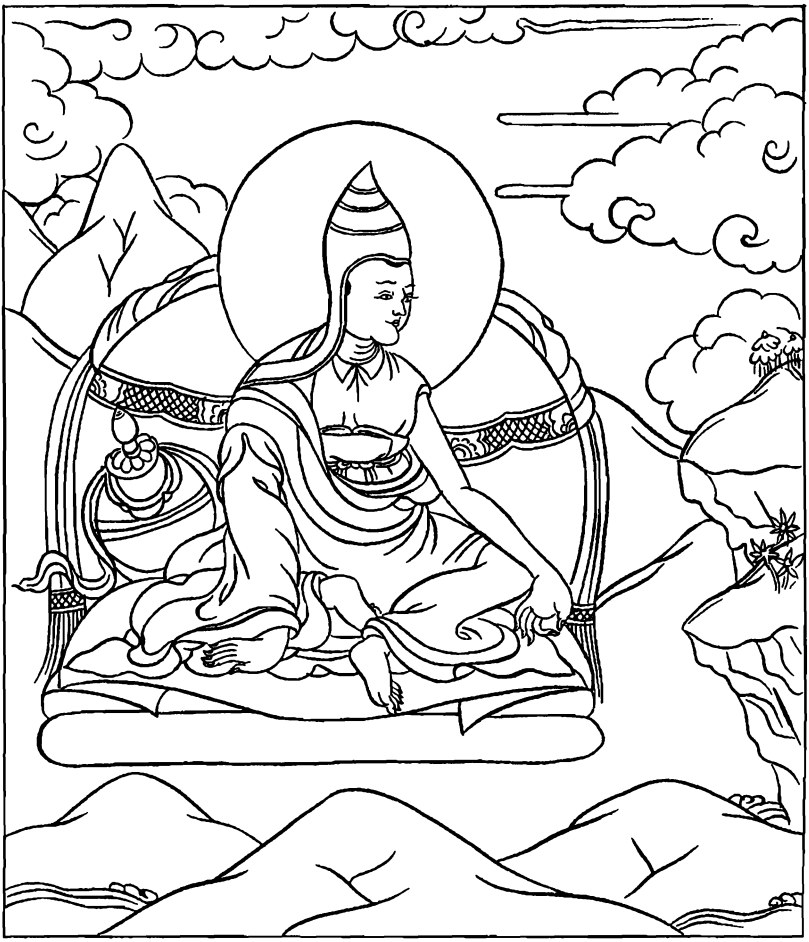
[108] In his *Encyclopedia of Knowledge* (*Shes bya kun khyab*) 'Jam mgon Kong sprul (op. 32, vol. 3: p. 158, 5) adds that, as the result of these four exercises one will perceive the body as a magical illusion, sensations as a dream, the mind in a condition of radiant luminosity like space and phenomena as clouds suddenly forming in the sky.

[109] In *Meditation Practices of the Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* (*sPyod 'jug sgom rim*) dPal sprul rin po che says (op. 18: pp. 536, 6): "During meditation, recognising the emptiness of all phenomena, during subsequent activities, being aware that everything is unreal like a dream or a magical show: this is the essence of *prajñā*."

The foregoing broad explanation mainly concerns the way to practise the celebrated 'three trainings' of the Philosophical Characteristics Causal Vehicle. A person who approaches the Dzogchen teaching must precisely discern the fundamental principles of the way taught in the sutras, and without allowing such knowledge to remain merely theoretical must succeed in also attaining precise personal experience of each of the practices described: this point is indispensable for the base level of Santi Maha Sangha.

Paltrul Rinpoche



Shantideva

PART TWO

THE THREE DHARMAS OF THE PATH AND THE REALISATION OF THE FRUIT

Rongzompa

In the root text of *Santi Maha Sangha* it is written:

The Buddha's perfect teaching contained in the sutras and tantras...

In fact, the three dharmas of the path that are view, meditation and behaviour represent the vital essence of all the sutra and tantra teachings transmitted with care by the perfectly enlightened Buddha. Moreover, the fundamental principle of view, meditation and behaviour of both sutras and tantras is perfectly contained in the view, meditation and behaviour of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo. In order to enable practitioners to have certainty in this regard I will expound concisely the major differences between sutra and tantra traditions with regard to view, meditation and behaviour.

Ju Mipham

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WAYS TO ESTABLISH THE VIEW

1. THE THREE PHILOSOPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS VEHICLES

Regarding the three Philosophical Characteristics Causal Vehicles, in *The Garland of Views* Padmasambhava says (op. 21, A: p. 162, 1; B: p. 18, 5):

⌘ The Philosophical Characteristics Vehicle comprises three subdivisions: the vehicle of the Shravakas, the vehicle of the Pratyekabuddhas and the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas[110]. ⌘

1.1. The essence of the view of the Shravakas

The Garland of Views says (op. 21, A: p. 162, 2; B: p. 18, 6):

⌘ According to the view of adherents of the Shravaka vehicle the theories which assert the total non-existence or which (conversely) assert eternity, etc. hypothesised by means of excess or of defect[111] by the Mutegpas and by the other (extremist schools) are like mistaking a rope for a snake and thus have no foundation whatsoever. (The Shravakas) deem real in the absolute sense, consciousness together with the infinitesimal particles of the four great elements that make up the aggregates, sense constituents

[110] There begins here an analysis of the nine vehicles (*theg pa rim dgu*) according to the explanations found in the text by Padmasambhava, even though (as mentioned below) according to another classification the first vehicle comprises 'the worldly vehicle of Devas and human beings' and the second vehicle merges the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas.

[111] In Tibetan *sgro dang bkur bas kun tu brtags*, an expression that condenses the two extreme views to be avoided by the Buddhist practitioner: affirming the existence of what does not exist, or eternalism, and negating the existence of what exists, or nihilism.

and sense bases etc. Meditating on the four noble truths they gradually realise the four fruits. ꕥ

The five aggregates are form, sensation, perception, the mental formations or samskaras, and consciousness[112]. The eighteen sense constituents comprise the six outer constituents or sense objects: forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects and conceivable phenomena; the six inner constituents or sense organs: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind; the six sense consciousnesses: visual consciousness, auditory consciousness, olfactory consciousness, gustatory consciousness, tactile consciousness, mental consciousness[113]. The twelve sense bases consist of the 'inner' bases of the six sense organs and the 'outer' bases of the six sense objects[114].

[112] The aggregate of form (*rūpa*) comprises four 'forms' as cause (the four elements earth, water, fire and air) and eleven 'forms' as effect (the five sense faculties, the five sense objects, and what is known as 'imperceptible form'. See note 121.) The aggregate of sensation (*vedanā*) consists of three types of sensation: pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. The aggregate of perception (*saṃjñā*) basically comprehends perceptions derived from contact with the six sense objects, however its particular feature is to distinguish the characteristics of objects (e.g., colour), which can embrace all three realms of passion, of form and without form. The aggregate of mental formations (*saṃskāra*) is responsible for actions and contains fifty-one virtuous and non-virtuous states associated with the active function of the mind and twenty-four formations dissociated from the active function of the mind (*ldan min 'du byed*), such as a newly acquired virtuous quality or a temporary state of 'cessation' (*nirodha*) in which one remains absorbed in a condition devoid of perception. The aggregate of consciousness (*vijñana*), that defines the object, comprises six consciousnesses (the five sense consciousnesses plus the mental consciousness) or eight consciousnesses (adding to these six the consciousness contaminated by the passions and the base consciousness).

[113] The eighteen constituents (*khams*; *dhātu*) include ten constituents pertaining to the aggregate of form: the five sense faculties plus the five sense objects; seven constituents pertaining to the aggregate of consciousness: the six consciousness plus the mental constituent (*yid kyi khams*, synonymous with *yid kyi dbang po*) by which is intended the cognitive faculty that ensues on the cessation of one of the six consciousnesses, plus the constituent of phenomena (*chos kyi khams*) or 'mental contents' that embraces the aggregates of sensation, of perception and of mental formations as well as 'imperceptible form' and non-composite phenomena.

[114] The twelve bases (*āyatana*; *skye mched*), literally 'that arise and develop', form another classification parallel to those of the *skandhas* and of the *dhātus*. In this case, for example, the seven constituents (*dhātu*) of consciousness are contained within the base (*āyatana*) of the mind.

Thus the view of the Shravakas contends that the absolute consists in the infinitesimal particles of the four elements: earth, water, fire and air of all of these sense functions and in consciousness: thus the object eventuates in the indivisible particle while consciousness eventuates in the indivisible instant[115]. On the basis of this tenet they meditate gradually on the four noble truths: the truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering and the truth of the path that leads to its cessation[116], in order to realise the four types of results, that are: one who has entered the stream, the once returner, the non-returner, the Arhat[117]

Furthermore, Rongzompa's commentary says (op. 31: p. 198, 2):

⌘ The term Shravaka denotes 'listeners' and in fact the Shravakas are called this because, unlike the Pratyekabuddhas they cannot waive receiving teachings from a teacher, and also in order to realise the fruit they need the basis of a teacher's teachings. At times the term 'Shravaka' is interpreted to mean 'listen and

[115] According to the Vaibhāṣika (*bye brag smra ba*) or 'atomic pluralist' school, adhered to by the Śrāvakas, material objects albeit unreal in their appearance inasmuch as they are aggregates, exist independently of the perceiving subject and their ultimate essence is composed of indivisible and indestructible atomic particles (*gzung ba rdul phran cha med*). They likewise affirm the existence of time as an 'indivisible instant' or 'moment of consciousness' (*'dzin pa skad cig cha med*). In practice, aggregate phenomena constitute the relative while the particles and indivisible instants constitute the absolute.

[116] The traditional texts explain that the truth of suffering concerns the aspect of which one should take cognisance, e.g. acknowledgement of an illness; the truth of the origin concerns the aspect to be overcome, e.g. the cause of the illness; the truth of the cessation concerns the aspect to be actualised, e.g. healing; the truth of the path concerns the method to apply, e.g. the medicine.

[117] 'One who has entered the stream' (*rgyun du zhugs pa*) means that the practitioner will no longer take rebirth in the three lower states of existence; 'once returner' (*lan cig phyir 'ong ba*) means only one more rebirth in one of the three higher states in the passion realm; 'non-returner' (*phyir mi 'ong ba*) means rebirth only in the form or formless realms; Arhat or 'one who has destroyed the enemies' of the passions (*dgra bcom pa*) is the highest level of realisation in Hīnayāna.

propagate' because, unlike the Pratyekabuddhas, the Shravakas transmit to others (knowledge of) the fruit they have accomplished. ⌘

Also, the *Self-arising State of Presence (Rig pa rang shar)* tantra (op. 29: p. 507, 4) states:

⌘ In the Shravaka vehicle
The entrance gate consists in the four truths:
This is the general entrance of the Shravakas.
Within there exist two streams,
The Vaibhashikas and the Sautrantikas[118]. ⌘

1.2. The essence of the view of the Pratyekabuddhas

The Garland of Views says (op. 21, A: p. 162, 5; B: p. 19, 1):

⌘ The view of adherents of the Pratyekabuddha vehicle concurs with that of the Shravakas with regard to refutation of an eternal being underlying phenomena etc. as hypothesised by means of excess or of defect by the Mutegpas and the other (extremist schools). Their characteristic feature consists rather in understanding the absence of independent being in the aggregate of form and in part of the constituents of dharmas. When they accomplish their (specific) fruit of individual realisation, unlike the Shravakas they do not follow a teacher but instead, by virtue of practice done in other lives, through the twelve links of interdependence they attain understanding of the deep meaning of the ultimate nature of phenomena thereby attaining the fruit of individual realisation[119]. ⌘

[118] The Sautrāntikas (*mdo sde pa*) or 'followers of the *sūtras*' are differentiated from the Vaibhāṣikas mainly because they do not ascribe the same degree of reality or independence to the phenomena experienced by the subject while nevertheless affirming the concept of 'instant of consciousness' as absolute. At times this view is deemed characteristic of the Pratyekabuddhas.

[119] The Pratyekabuddhas pursue their path in different ways according to whether they have keen capacity and live in solitude: the 'rhinoceros-like Pratyekabuddha'

Thus they base their view on the possibility to understand the deep ultimate nature of phenomena through the twelve links of interdependence, which are: ignorance, mental formations or samskaras, and consciousness, the three links that constitute the determining causes; name and form, sense bases, contact, and sensation, the four links that constitute the result of the determining causes; desire, attachment, and becoming, that constitute the causes of existence; birth, and 'old age and death', the two links that constitute the result of the causes of existence[120].

Furthermore, Rongzompa's commentary says (op. 31: p. 198, 5):

⌘ The Pratyekabuddhas (solitary Buddhas) are so called because to accomplish the fruit, unlike the Shravakas they do not follow the oral teachings of a teacher and above all they do not communicate the Dharma they attain to others in words. At times it is explained that they are so called because, unlike the Bodhisattvas

(*rang rgyal bse ru lta bu*), or instead live in a group (*rang rgyal tshogs na spyod pa*) and follow a more gradual course, in both cases without the help of a teacher.

[120] The twelve links of interdependence or of dependent origination (*rten 'brel bcu gnyis*) define the process of generation of *saṁsāra* on the basis of the principle of cause and effect. Ignorance (*ma rig pa*) indicates not being aware of the true nature of phenomena, ascribing selfhood to what is devoid of self and so on. It engenders mental formations or *saṃskāras* (*'du byed*) that enable action and consequently the accumulation of karmic traces. The mental formations generate consciousness (*rnam shes*) compelled to reincarnate in forms of existence. At this point, when the consciousness enters the mother's womb the five *skandhas* or 'name and form' (*ming gzugs*) are formed; the four 'names': consciousness, sensation, perception and mental formations, and form. Then the six inner sense bases (*skye mched*) or six sense faculties are formed. Through these contact (*reg pa*) occurs with the sense objects. Contact engenders sensation (*tshor ba*), that can be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Pleasant sensations kindle the desire (*sred pa*) to possess the object of enjoyment. This desire then becomes attachment to the object, wishing never to be separated from the cause of pleasure (*len pa*). This attachment produces actions capable of creating the causes for a consequent rebirth (*srid pa*) thereby perpetuating becoming. Due to these causes one takes a new rebirth (*skye ba*) with all the suffering involved. Birth ineluctably entails old age and death (*rga shi*) and the cycle of *saṁsāra* repeats itself. Thus each link generates the succeeding one and is in its turn generated by the previous one. On the basis of this principle, by eliminating the first link: ignorance, one eliminates mental formations and so on.

they do not generate the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of many beings but aspire solely to their own liberation. According to a further explanation, the terms prata and buddha mean 'secondary cause' and 'understanding' (respectively), because after having accumulated merit (and wisdom) for countless kalpas by means of a secondary cause the Pratyekabuddhas finally understand the state of enlightenment; or because, understanding the secondary causes that underpin the twelve links of interdependence, such as the secondary cause of ignorance producing mental formations and so on, they attain realisation. Thus they do understand secondary causes. ⌘

Also, the *Self-arising State of Presence (Rig pa rang shar)* tantra (op. 29: p. 510, 6) states:

⌘ In the sutra system of the Pratyekabuddhas
The entrance gate consists in the twelve links of interdependence.
The view is understanding the absence of identity of the person
And of half of phenomena. ⌘

Moreover, regarding the expression "their characteristic feature consists rather in understanding the absence of independent being in the aggregate of form and in part of the constituents of dharmas" Rongzompa's commentary explains (op. 31: p. 208, 4):

⌘ This means that, on the basis of the subdivision in five aggregates they understand the absence of identity solely in the aggregate of form, and on the basis of the subdivision into sense bases and sense constituents (they understand the absence of identity) in the ten sense bases and ten sense constituents tied to form plus only one more aspect of the bases and constituents of phenomena: imperceptible form[121]. ⌘

[121] To summarise: the Pratyekabuddhas accede to the absence of a self or independent self-nature (*bdag med*) in the aggregate of form, as regards the classification of the five *skandhas*; in the ten internal and external bases (*āyatana*) linked to the five senses, as regards the classification of the twelve *āyatanas*; in the ten constituents (*dhātu*) that

And *Guhyapati's Oral Instruction (gSang bdag zhal lung)* by Lochen Dharmashri says (op. 34: p. 57, 3):

⌘ Their understanding of the absence of identity of the person is the same as that of the Shravakas. In addition, they understand the absence of identity of phenomena as regards the object, that is that infinitesimal particles too are devoid of substance, however they still uphold that the instant of consciousness as subject is absolute. ⌘

1.3. The essence of the view of the Bodhisattvas

The Garland of Views says (op. 21, A: p. 163, 2; B: p. 19, 3):

⌘ The theoretical view of followers of the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas is that, at the absolute level all the phenomena of existence, pertaining both to the sphere of the disturbing emotions and to the aspect of complete purity[122], lack self-existing nature. (Nevertheless) at the relative level they manifest like a magical illusion, distinctly and with their own characteristics. They also claim that practising the ten Paramitas enables them to progress gradually through the ten levels of realization or bhumis, right up to attainment of supreme enlightenment. ⌘

comprise the five sense faculties and the five sense objects, as regards the classification of the eighteen *dhātus*. All of this pertains to the sense sphere. As regards the aspect of consciousness and of the phenomena that constitute its object, there are the two 'bases' of the mind and phenomena and the eight 'consciousnesses' that include the seven *dhātus* derived from the aggregate of consciousness plus the constituent of phenomena or mental contents (*chos kyi khams*): in terms of all of these the Pratyekabuddhas acknowledge the absence of a self only in 'imperceptible form' (*rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs*), the eleventh component of the aggregate of form, a term that indicates a kind of alteration of one's individual structure determined by a precise will: taking a vow, for example, is a physical and verbal act, but its effect persists within the person; this 'alteration' that takes place is called 'imperceptible form'.

[122] In Tibetan *kun nas nyon mongs pa dang rnam par byang ba'i chos*, synonyms of *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

Thus the way of the Bodhisattvas consists in the ten Paramitas. These are: the Paramita of generosity, the Paramita of morality, the Paramita of patience, the Paramita of perseverance, the Paramita of meditative stability, the Paramita of prajña, the Paramita of method, the Paramita of force, the Paramita of aspiration, the Paramita of wisdom[123].

Training in them in a gradual manner they realise the ten bhumis or levels of realisation of the Bodhisattvas. These are: 1. Joyous; 2. Stainless; 3. Enlightening; 4. Radiant; 5. Difficult to achieve; 6. Realised; 7. Far gone; 8. Immovable; 9. Supreme intelligence; 10. Cloud of Dharma[124].

[123] The *pāramitā* of method (*thabs*) refers to the dedication of one's merit to the enlightenment of all beings; the *pāramitā* of force (*stobs*) signifies no longer being conditioned by adversities and negative forces; the *pāramitā* of aspiration (*smon lam*) means intensely wishing in all future lives never to separate from *bodhicitta* and to practise the *pāramitā* for the benefit of beings; the *pāramitā* of wisdom (*ye shes*) indicates genuine understanding of emptiness, the true nature of phenomena.

[124] The first level is called 'joyous' (*rab tu dga' ba*) because, having perceived the true nature of phenomena the Bodhisattva is aware of approaching enlightenment and thus of being able to help beings. At this level the Bodhisattva perfects completely the *pāramitā* of generosity. The second level is called 'stainless' (*dri ma med pa*) because the Bodhisattva has transcended all impurities related to conduct, at this level completely perfecting the *pāramitā* of morality. The third level is called 'enlightening' (*'od byed pa*) because the Bodhisattva shines with the light of Dharma for all beings, at this level completely perfecting the *pāramitā* of patience. The fourth level is called 'radiant' (*'od 'phro ba*) because the Bodhisattva blazes with wisdom that burns all obstacles, at this level completely perfecting the *pāramitā* of perseverance. The fifth level is called 'difficult to achieve' (*sbyang dka 'ba*) because the Bodhisattva has the capacity to ripen other beings without being disturbed by the problems they create, at this level completely perfecting the *pāramitā* of meditative stability. The sixth level is called 'realised' (*mngon du gyur pa*) because the Bodhisattva realises the true nature of *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, at this level completely perfecting the *pāramitā* of *prajña*. The seventh level is called 'far gone' (*ring du song ba*) because the Bodhisattva is near the eighth level where all striving ceases, at this level completely perfecting the *pāramitā* of method. The eighth level is called 'immovable' (*mi g.yo ba*) because the Bodhisattva is no longer subject to dualistic concepts, at this level completely perfecting the *pāramitā* of force. The ninth level is called 'supreme intelligence' (*legs pa'i blo gros*) because the Bodhisattva possesses supreme discriminating wisdom, at this level completely perfecting the *pāramitā* of aspiration. The tenth level is called 'cloud of Dharma' (*chos kyi sprin*) because teachings scatter from the Bodhisattva like rain falling on beings to extinguish their passions, or because the Bodhisattva possesses contemplations and *mantra* like clouds filling space, at this level completely perfecting the *pāramitā* of wisdom. Beyond these ten there is the final level of enlightenment called 'total light' (*kun tu 'od*). See Chapter Eight: 1.

Furthermore, Rongzompa's commentary says (op. 31: p. 199, 5):

⌘ Bodhisattvas are thus called because they aspire (with great courage: *sattva*) to enlightenment (*bodhi*) and are stable in their intention, or because the objects of their interest are enlightenment and living beings. ⌘

And (op. 31: p. 200, 2):

⌘ Interpreting the term Bodhisattva in the sense of 'bodhi-being', 'being' refers to any living being: thus a living being that has Bodhichitta is denominated a Bodhisattva. Bodhichitta is the union of prajña and compassion. ⌘

And the *Self-arising State of Presence* states (op. 29: p. 512, 5):

⌘ In the Bodhisattva vehicle
The entrance gate consists in the two truths,
The absolute and the relative[125]. ⌘

1.4. The real difference in meaning and origin of the terms Hinayana and Mahayana

The vehicles of the Shravakas and of the Pratyekabuddhas are denominated Hinayana, 'small vehicle' or 'minor vehicle' The vehicle

[125] The meaning of relative truth and absolute truth was briefly discussed in Chapter Four: 6.6.4. Rong zom pa epitomises the topic saying that (op. 31: p. 218, 4): "The essence of the absolute is the ultimate nature of phenomena that transcends all conceptual limits" and (op. 31: p. 220, 1): "The essence of the relative is the deluded consciousness together with its vision." Fundamentally there are two philosophical schools in Mahāyāna: the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra or Cittamātra. According to the Cittamātra or 'mind only' school phenomena exist solely as mental images and only consciousness, pure non-dual cognitive potentiality, has absolute existence. The Madhyamaka school, based on the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*, transcends all conceptual limits and thus does not even accept the existence of the consciousness as absolute.

of the Bodhisattvas, conversely, is known as the Mahayana, 'great vehicle' or 'higher vehicle'

As the expression 'lower vehicle'[126] is also used for the Hinayana some have interpreted the difference between the two terms Hinayana and Mahayana to mean that the former is inferior to the latter, as if one were higher than the other, but this point of view is completely mistaken. Many scholars and realised persons of the past, in fact, used the expression thegmen or 'lower vehicle' only because it was easier to pronounce than thegchung or thegwog, and certainly not in a disparaging way with regard to the Hinayana, deeming it something inferior. To prove this it is sufficient to reflect on the fact that the Hinayana constitutes the original teaching of the first turning of the 'wheel of Dharma' in which Buddha Shakyamuni taught the four noble truths.

The reason why the expression 'small vehicle' is used is, rather, that its adherents, on the basis of the principle of Buddha's first teaching on the four noble truths, mainly apply the foundation of moral discipline. It aims to avoid harming other beings and this discipline, which by means of vows serves to thwart negative actions of body, voice and mind, is precisely the way that people of minor or lower capacity put into practice the truth of cessation (of suffering).

Practitioners of the Bodhisattva vehicle, instead, on the basis of the principles expounded in the second and third turnings of the wheel of Dharma[127], mainly apply the foundation of acting deliberately for the good of other beings. It is precisely engagement on the basis of training to intend to become responsible for others' good in diverse circumstances that constitutes the way that persons of greater or higher capacity apply the path. It is for these reasons that the expressions Hinayana or 'small vehicle' and Mahayana or 'great vehicle' arose.

[126] The Tibetan terms discussed are *theg pa chung ngu, theg pa 'og ma* and *theg pa dman pa.*

[127] According to tradition Buddha turned the wheel of Dharma three times: the first time, at Sarnath, he taught the Four Noble Truths (*bden pa bzhi'i chos 'khor*), the basis of the Hinayana teachings; the second time, at Vulture Peak, he transmitted the Mahāyāna teachings on the absence of characteristics (*mtshan nyid med pa'i chos 'khor*) found in the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*; the third time he transmitted the Mahāyāna teachings for discerning the true meaning (*legs par rnam par phye ba'i chos 'khor*) centred on the 'Buddha nature' or *tathāgathagarbha.*

2. THE SECRET MANTRA VEHICLES

In Tibetan the Sanskrit word mantra is rendered ngag and Mantrayana ngagkyi thegpa, i.e., Mantra Vehicle. Its synonym, more often used, is Vajrayana or Vajra Vehicle.

All the teachings attributed to Buddha Shakyamuni have been gathered together and subdivided into three sections of scriptures or Tripitaka called: Vinayapitaka (section on discipline); Sutrapitaka, (section of the sutras); Abhidharmapitaka (section on metaphysics). The teachings of the Mantrayana are generally considered to belong to the Abhidharmapitaka, but some Indian and Tibetan teachers have proposed a further section in which to include them: the Vidyadharapitaka or 'section of the Vidyadharas (knowledge holders)', whereby they accept a fourfold subdivision of the scriptures.

2.1. The difference between the sutras and tantras

As for the characteristics that distinguish the teaching of the tantras from that of the sutras, *The Lamp of the Three Methods (Tshul gsum sgron me)* states (quoted in op. 31, vol. 2: p. 565, 13):

> ⌘ Even though the final goal is one alone, it does not ignore;
> It has many methods without enforcing asceticism;
> It is suited to persons of keen capacity:
> For these reasons the Mantrayana is superior. ⌘

Jamgön Kongtrul comments, in *Encyclopedia of Knowledge* (op. 32, vol. 2: p. 564, 17):

> ⌘ Even though the final goal to be achieved is sole 'non-abiding nirvana'[128] (Mantrayana) *does not ignore* the methods of meditation on the deity and of recitation of mantras, etc. that are ap-

[128] In Tibetan *mi gnas pa'i myang 'das*: the state of 'non-abiding' enlightenment that transcends the conceptual limits of both *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

plied on entering the way by means of initiation[129]. Not ignoring also means that the method is not only one, instead there are infinite series of tantras with descriptions of actions and kinds of behaviour congruent with the diverse capacities of people, thus *it has many methods*. There are also many methods in the first vehicle (of the sutras) but they presuppose a path that, being of necessity based on asceticism and vows etc. is full of difficulties. On the other hand, being used by practitioners according to their individual temperament the methods of the second vehicle enable obtainment of bliss by means of (the method of) bliss itself. So, as it enables progress with few difficulties and without asceticism (Mantrayana) is deemed superior. One could think: "Why then did Buddha not teach everybody (this vehicle that) does not ignore (the diverse methods), has many methods and is free of hardship?" Buddha did not teach on the basis of his own knowledge but rather according to the capacities of his disciples. Receptacles suitable to receive the Mantra teaching are persons of the keenest capacity, while those who received the Paramita vehicle (of Mahayana) are of lesser capacity than recipients of Mantra, whence they are not suitable to the Mantra teaching. ⌘

Therefore the Mantra Vehicle is deemed be superior to the Philosophical Characteristics Vehicle on the basis of these three fundamental reasons.

2.2. The meaning of tantra

The meaning of the word tantra, that literally means 'continuity', is explained thus in Jamgön Kongtrul's *Encyclopedia of Knowledge* (op. 32, vol. 2: p. 613, 2):

[129] This means that practitioners of Tantra have the capacity to work at the level of energy integrating all the aspects of body, voice and mind in the pure dimension of the deity into which they have transformed themselves.

⌘ The word tantra refers precisely to bodhichitta-Samantabhadra which has no beginning or end and which shines with luminous natural clarity. It 'continues' because from beginningless time until the attainment of Enlightenment it is always present without any interruption whatsoever. ⌘

What is the real meaning of this 'continuity'? Even though the condition of emptiness or original purity of the essence and the condition of uninterrupted clarity of the nature are inseparable they manifest in the 'continuity' of the alternating aspects of the state of calm and of the movement of thoughts. Any practitioner can actually discern this condition by experiencing it for him or herself.

2.3. The subdivisions of the series of tantras[130]

There exist diverse ways of classifying the various types of tantras, respectively in two, three, four and six series.

One subdivision in two series: Kriya Tantra and Yoga Tantra, was proposed by the teacher Buddhaguhya[131]

Lilavajra and other teachers[132] on the other hand considered there to be three series of tantras: Kriya Tantra, Charya Tantra and Yoga Tantra. In this case all the higher tantras or anuttara tantras are included in the Yoga Tantra series.

Conversely, Nagarjuna and other teachers[133] assert a fourfold subdivision: Kriya Tantra, Charya Tantra, Yoga Tantra and Anuttara Yoga Tantra.

Most teachers of Secret Mantra of the Nyingma or ancient tradition subdivide the tantras in three 'outer' series: Kriya Tantra, Charya Tantra

[130] This section is based on *Encyclopedia of Knowledge* by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul (op. 32, vol. 2: pp. 572ff.)

[131] In this case, Kriyā includes the *tantras* from *Dam tshig gsum bkod* to *rNam snang mngon byang*, while Yoga includes the *tantras* from *De nyid 'dus pa* to *Gsang ba 'dus pa* or *Guhyasamāja.*

[132] The text also mentions the teachers Buddhaguhya and Kun snying.

[133] The text also mentions the teacher Rab 'byor bskyangs, and explains that this classification, including the explanation found in paragraph 2.4., is based on the *De nyid 'dus pa tantra.*

and Yoga Tantra, and three 'inner' series: Mahayoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga.

2.4. The reason for the subdivision in various series of tantras

Concerning the reason for these subdivisions, the teachings contained in the various tantras are held to have appeared in conformity with the diverse types of conditions, capacities and proclivities of practitioners.

Thus, for devotees of outer activities such as ablutions and purification there are the Kriya Tantras.

For practitioners inclined towards ritual actions like in the Kriya Tantra but at the same time interested in inner meditation on the essential nature like in the Yoga Tantra there are the Charya or Ubhaya (literally, 'of both') Tantras.

For those who regard outer activities as merely a distraction and aspire mainly to devote themselves to meditation on the essential nature there are the Yoga Tantras.

Finally, for practitioners who wish to enjoy any thing in a state of wisdom in which there is no separation between method and prajña there are the Anuttara Yoga Tantras.

2.5. The outer tantras

2.5.1. The essence of the view of Kriya Tantra

The Garland of Views says (op. 21, A: p. 163, 5; B: p. 19, 6):

⌘ According to the view of adherents of Kriya Tantra, in the absolute there is neither birth nor cessation and (recognising this) on the relative plane they meditate on the form of the deity[134]. In

[134] This also means that the deities are a manifestation, on the relative plane, of the absolute state of *dharmakāya* beyond birth and cessation. This is one of the fundamental characteristics that distinguishes the *tantra* teachings from the *sūtra*, where the relative is deemed solely as the impure vision to be overcome.

this way realisation is achieved mainly by means of the conjoined power of the ritual objects and requisites together with the primary and secondary factors (of realisation): the image of the deity, the symbol of the Mind, recitation of the mantra, the norms of cleanliness, (observance of) the astrological calendar, (propitious) days and constellations and so on[135]. ཧཱུྃ

Further, the *Self-arising State of Presence* tantra states (op. 29: p. 515, 5):

ཧཱུྃ In the system of the Kriya vehicle system
The entrance gate consists in the three purities,
Ablutions and norms of cleanliness.
Concerning the samaya to observe,
You must not drink the same water as a samaya breaker
And always behave without distraction.
As the (ritual) action, engage in the three purities.
What are the three purities?
The purity of deity and mandala,
The purity of ritual objects and substances,
The purity of mantras and the contemplation[136].
Understanding of the view
Is based on the principle of the relationship between the deity and the practitioner
As if the former were the lord and the latter the subject.
The things to renounce

[135] The image of the deity, the recitation of the *mantra* and the symbol of the Mind are the means to empower the practitioner's three 'doors' into the three states of Body, Voice and Mind. The symbol of Mind (*thugs mtshan*) denotes the symbolic attribute (*phyag mtshan*) of the deity to be visualised, e.g. the *vajra*. These three aspects of the practice constitute the primary factors (*rgyu*) of realisation, while the norms of cleanliness, the ritual objects etc. are the secondary factors (*rkyen*).

[136] In Tibetan *dag pa gsum: lha dang dkyil 'khor dag pa, rdzas dang yo byad dag pa, sngags dang ting 'dzin dag pa*. Readers should bear in mind that the term *ting nge 'dzin* (*samādhi*), here rendered contemplation, can take different meanings according to context. In Tantra, for example, often it refers to phases of visualisation and does not concur with the meaning it assumes in rDzogs chen Atiyoga.

Are meat, fish, garlic
And alcoholic beverages.
There is attachment to contemplation. ⌘

The meaning of this quotation is clearly explained by Longchenpa in *Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle (Theg mchog mdzod)* which states (op. 14: p. 130, 5):

⌘ (The Kriya Tantra) can be subdivided into two types: the system that mainly applies purity and the system that mainly applies concentration[137]
In the former, starting with the ritual ablutions and norms of cleanliness you meditate on the purity of your own body as the form of the deity: you perform the ablutions three times a day, change your clothes three times a day, consume the three white substances[138] and the three sweet substances[139] and so on. The supremacy of this (system) over the lower (vehicles) consists (anyway) in the fact that everything that appears on the relative plane, without being deemed real, (is transformed) by means of the three concentrations[140]:
- Concentrating on the state of the Body as the form (of the deity) all the phenomena of vision are recognised as the 'deity of form'[141] and so on, whereby without having to renounce form you no longer remain within the conceptual consideration of the limits of unity and multiplicity.
- Concentrating on the state of the Voice as the seed syllable all audible phenomena are recognised as the 'deity of sound' and so

[137] In Tibetan *dag pa gtsor byed pa* and *dmigs pa gtsor byed pa.*

[138] The three white substances (*dkar gsum*) are yoghurt, milk and butter. (O.N.)

[139] The three sweet substances (*mngar gsum*) are sugar, molasses and honey. (O.N.)

[140] In Tibetan *dmigs pa gsum.*

[141] The deity of form (*gzugs kyi lha*) and the deity of sound (*sgra'i lha*) mentioned below are two of the six divine aspects of Kriyā Tantra (*kri ya lha drug*) that constitute the creation stage or *bskyed rim.* The other four are: the deity of emptiness (*stong pa'i lha*), the deity of the letter (*yi ge'i lha*), the deity of the *mudrā* (*phyag rgya'i lha*) and the deity of characteristics (*mtshan ma'i lha*).

all sounds and words become recitation of mantra. In this way you no longer remain within the conceptual consideration of the fourfold limit of arising and ceasing[142] and you perceive everything you hear solely as the sound of the deity.
- Concentrating on the state of the Mind as the symbolic attribute all thinking is recognised as the 'deity of contemplation'. Thus thoughts never deviate from meditative stability, nor do you remain within the conceptual consideration of great interdependence[143]. In this way (you understand that) nothing arisen or originated exists, even in the relative sphere.
On the absolute plane, regarding the Yidam deity or wisdom deity (*jñānasattva*) as lord and yourself or the promise deity (*samayasattva*) as servant[144] interruptions abate and you obtain the siddhis. By means of the ordinary siddhis you do not renounce the relative, and by means of the supreme siddhi (you understand that) the absolute is not something to achieve[145]. These are the reasons for its superiority.
In the system that mainly applies concentration, by means of the stage of creation or kyedrim and the 'subtle' stage of completion or dzogrim, meditate on the deity visualising the radiation and reabsorption. In this way you come to concentrate on forms, sounds and thoughts as the Body, Voice and Mind of the deity. ⌘

[142] In Tibetan *mu bzhi'i skye ba 'gag pa*: a philosophical argument of the Madhyamaka Prāsaṅgika school intended to refute the existence of an independent entity by overcoming the four limits of birth and cessation (*skye 'gag*), eternalism and nihilism (*rtag chad*), being and non-being (*yod med*), vision and emptiness (*snang stong*).

[143] In Tibetan *rten 'brel chen po*, that is not remaining within the notion of the ordinary relative condition.

[144] Once one has transformed oneself into the promise deity (*dam tshig sems dpa'*) one visualises before oneself the wisdom deity (*ye shes sems dpa'*) that personifies the wisdom of the invoked deity.

[145] The ordinary *siddhis* are paranormal powers acquired by means of practice, e.g. the ability to fly, or they can refer to the four actions of the *maṇḍala*: pacification, increase, conquest and fierce action. The supreme *siddhi* is realisation.

2.5.2. The essence of the view of Ubhaya or Charya Tantra

The Garland of Views says (op. 21, A: p. 164, 1; B: p. 19, 7):

⌘ According to the view of adherents of the Ubhaya Tantra vehicle, in the absolute neither birth nor cessation exist, (and with this recognition) on the relative plane they meditate on the form of the deity. In this way realisation is achieved by virtue both of contemplation based on the 'four characteristic conditions' and of the conjoined power of the ritual objects and requisites together with the primary and secondary factors and so on. ⌘

Further, the *Self-arising State of Presence* tantra states (op. 29: p. 516, 4):

⌘ This is the Ubhaya:
In its view it adheres to the Yoga,
In its conduct to the Kriya,
Therefore it is called 'tantra of both'. ⌘

And Longchenpa briefly adds in *Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle* (op. 14: p. 132, 4):

⌘ Because the Ubhaya or 'vehicle of the tantra of both' applies the behaviour of the Kriya and has the same view as the Yoga it is called the 'neutral vehicle'. In fact, after having purified body, voice and mind by means of ablutions and the norms of cleanliness, (its adherents) practise (the sadhana of) the Supreme Mandala[146] etc. by visualising the five factors of realisation and so on. ⌘

In conclusion, the means of realisation in the Ubhaya are:
- the five factors of realisation, that will be explained in the section on Yoga Tantra;
- contemplation that has four characteristic conditions, which are: visualising oneself in the form of the deity, the deity (in front), the

[146] See note 152.

syllables (of the mantra) residing in one's own heart and the deity's heart symbolising inseparability, recitation of the mantra[147];

- the ritual objects and requisites and the power of the primary and secondary factors.

They assert that all of this enables realisation of the absolute state beyond birth and cessation.

2.5.3. The essence of the view of Yoga Tantra

The Garland of Views says (op. 21: p. 164, 3; B: p. 20, 1):

⌘ According to the view of adherents of the outer tantras vehicle of the yoga of control[148], without ascribing fundamental importance to external ritual requisites they meditate on the male and female deities (that represent) the absolute state beyond birth and cessation, practising contemplation aimed at making their own state likewise totally pure[149]. In this way realisation is achieved mainly through the yoga in which one meditates on the four mudras of the forms of the realised ones. ⌘

[147] In Tibetan *de nyid rnam pa bzhi*: the four characteristic conditions, of oneself, of the deity, of contemplation, of the recitation of *mantra*. First the practitioner transforms into the promise deity (*samayasattva*), then invites the wisdom deity (*jñānasattva*) in front, visualises well the lunar disc and the seed syllable of the *mantra* in the hearts of both, then recites the *mantra* visualising the radiation and reabsorption in order to receive the flow of empowering energy.

[148] *The Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* subdivides the Yoga vehicle in two series: the *tantras* of the outer *yoga* of control (*rnal 'byor phyi pa thub pa'i rgyud*) and the *tantras* of the inner *yoga* of method (*rnal 'byor nang pa thabs kyi rgyud*). The former, corresponding to the Yoga Tantra, are for those who have not got the capacity to apply the principle of absolute equality characteristic of the inner *tantras* and who consequently must comply with rules that limit behaviour.

[149] This means that the male and female deities are the manifestation of the absolute state and that the practitioner meditates recognising the view of this total original purity.

Further, the *Self-arising State of Presence* tantra states (op. 29: p. 516, 6):

⌘ This is the Yoga system:
The entrance gate consists in the five factors of realisation,
The view is based on recognition of the deity and oneself as being like two friends,
The samaya to observe include the three points not to fail[150],
The conduct must transcend acceptance and rejection. ⌘

Furthermore, Longchenpa explains in *Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle* (op. 14: p. 133, 1):

⌘ (The Yoga Tantra) can be subdivided into two types: the system that mainly applies action and the system that mainly applies contemplation[151].
In the former one performs the ritual actions of Supreme Action and of the Supreme Mandala[152]. The first of these in its turn is classified in two types: Minor Action and Supreme Action[153].
Followers of the Minor Action seek to attain realisation by means of one of the sundry ritual practices and thus engage assiduously in worship through offerings, tormas, fire rites[154], recitation of the essential mantra and so on. In the Supreme Action all these

[150] In Tibetan *ma khrel rnam gsum*: not failing the *yi dam* deity, not failing one's teacher and spiritual companions, not failing one's own mind.

[151] In Tibetan *las gtso bor byed pa* and *ting nge 'dzin gtso bor byed pa.*

[152] In Tibetan *las rgyal mchog* and *dkyil 'khor rgyal mchog.* Usually these terms denote two of the three phases of the *bskyed rim* stage: the initial contemplation of union (*dang po sbyor ba'i ting nge 'dzin*), that prepares the base for transformation into the pure dimension; contemplation of the supreme *maṇḍala* (*dkyil 'khor rgyal mchog gi ting nge 'dzin*), that refers to the complete creation of the *maṇḍala* with the central deity; contemplation of the supreme action (*las rgyal mchog gi ting nge 'dzin*), that refers to the visualisation of the activities performed by the *yi dam* deity, e.g. purifying the impure dimensions etc.

[153] In Tibetan *las thor bu ba* and *las rgyal mchog.*

[154] In Tibetan *sbyin sreg* (*homa*), a tantric rite in which one burns substances, whose aim can be combined to one of the four principal actions of the *maṇḍala.*

(rituals) are practised as secondary factors for realisation of the mandala: performing torma and fire rites etc. five or six times is deemed to enable obtainment of the realisation sought.
On the other hand, (practitioners of) the Supreme Mandala maintain that (by means of rituals) from the earth (consecration) rite (as the base of the mandala) up to receiving the initiation, an individual can attain enlightenment.
In the system that mainly applies contemplation, after having done the initial contemplation of union and then the contemplation of total purity, whether one meditates on a deity or a mandala it is necessary in any case to develop the visualisation by means of the five factors of realisation. These are:
- The factor of realisation of method and prajña by means of the sun and moon seat, that derives from meditation (on the sun and moon) one on top of the other on a lotus seat.
- The factor of realisation of the purity of the sense bases by means of the form of the Body complete with ornaments.
- The factor of realisation of the sounds, words and names by means of the chakra of the vowels and consonants (*āli kāli*) of the Voice.
- The factor of realisation (in the dimension) of one's specific Buddha family by means of the symbolic attributes of the Mind such as the vajra, wheel, jewel and so on[155].
- The factor of realisation of the purity of the ultimate nature of phenomena by means of the pure deity of wisdom or jñana-sattva[156].
Meditating on these five (aspects), outwardly the five aggregates and five elements are purified; inwardly karma and the five emotions are purified; in secret the five objects and five senses are

[155] The symbolic attributes (*phyag mtshan*) of the five Tathāgatas are, respectively, the wheel of Vairocana, the *vajra* of Akṣobhya, the jewel of Ratnasambhava, the lotus of Amitabha, the crossed *vajra* of Amoghasiddhi.
[156] The five factors of realisation (*mngon byang lnga*), the five fundamental phases of the creation stage or *bskyed rim* in Yoga Tantra, are sometimes listed slightly differently.

purified, in consequence one realises the state of enlightenment of the five families. Meditating on the Yidam deity and oneself as two siblings or friends, (on the one hand) you discern not to expect anything good from the deity because the siddhis issue from you; (and on the other hand) you discern not to expect anything bad from yourself because you possess the capacity of immediate manifestation in the illusory body of the deity[157]. These are the reasons for its superiority over the lower (vehicles). Moreover, acknowledging the non-duality between the deity to visualise and yourself not even the names of absolute and relative any longer exist. ⌘

So, engaging in these practices and in the meditation on the four mudras, that are: Samayamudra, Dharmamudra, Karmamudra, Mahamudra, according to the view (of this tradition) it is possible to achieve the supreme state of the absolute beyond birth and cessation.

Concerning the four mudras, *Summary of the Wish-fulfilling Treasury (Yid bzhin mdzod kyi grub mtha' bsdus pa)* by Ju Mipham states (op. 24: p. 990, 1):

⌘ The aspect of the Body is Mahamudra; the aspect of the Voice is Dharmamudra; the aspect of the Mind is Samayamudra; the accomplishment of the actions of radiation and reabsorption of rays etc. is Karmamudra. By means of these one's own three doors (body, voice and mind) and the aspect of the activities are made authentic as, and meditated on as, the essence of the Body, Voice, Mind and Activities of the deity. ⌘

And as regards Mahamudra, in his commentary Rongzompa adds (op. 31: p. 239, 6):

⌘ Mahamudra is the symbol of the Body and is designated as 'great' because it serves greatly as the cause for remembering

[157] The ability to manifest in the illusory body (*sgyu lus*) of the deity is one of the realisations of the completion stage or *rdzogs rim*.

(or for the presence of) the deity. According to others, it is called 'great' because it represents the base of all the other mudras[158]. ॐ

So, we have read some explanations concerning the essential view of the Kriya Tantra, Ubhaya or Charya Tantra, and Yoga Tantra, by means of which we can get some idea of their specific modes of meditation and behaviour.

2.6. The Anuttara Yoga Tantras

The Anuttara Yoga Tantras or Higher Yoga Tantras are comprehended in two different traditions: the ancient system that commences with the first translation phase (VIII century) known as Nyingma, and the modern system of the second translation phase (X-XI centuries) known as Sarma[159]. All the higher tantras translated from the time of the great translator Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055) on are classified as belonging to the 'later translation phase' or 'modern tradition of the later translation phase', while the tantras translated before this date are classified as belonging to the 'earlier translation phase' or 'ancient tradition of the early translation phase'

[158] According to Mi pham's commentary (op. 16: p. 436), *mahāmudrā* refers to the divine form into which one has transformed oneself together with the seed syllable and the specific attributes; *dharmamudrā* can consist in visualising a five-pronged *vajra* on one's tongue; *samayamudrā* can consist in visualising a form as a five-pronged *vajra* as a symbol of having attained the five wisdoms, or in having the *vajra* and bell; *karmamudrā* can refer to visualising a crossed *vajra* at one's heart on a lunar disc whence rays of light radiate inviting all the enlightened ones and performing deeds to benefit beings.

[159] The gSar ma tradition consists of the bKa 'brgyud pa, Sa skya pa and dGe lugs pa schools with their various subschools.

2.7.1. The three aspects of tantra

In the modern tradition or Sarma the meaning of 'tantra' is elucidated through three aspects.

In fact, the 'tantra of the natural condition' or 'tantra of the primary cause' pertains to the fundamental cause (of realisation). The 'tantra of the base' or 'tantra of the method' pertains to concomitant factors or secondary causes (of realisation). Finally, the 'tantra that can no longer be lost' or 'tantra of the fruit' pertains to the state of enlightenment perfectly endowed with the capacity to accomplish the two benefits (for oneself and for others)[160].

2.7.2. The three orders of tantras: father, mother, non-dual

On the basis of their fundamental characteristics, on the other hand, the tantras are subdivided into three classes of yogas: father tantras, mother tantras and non-dual tantras.

Even though there are diverse ways of identifying the father, mother and non-dual tantras most scholars concur on the fundamental points. For example in *Summary of the Wish-fulfilling Treasury* Ju Mipham states (op. 24: p. 992, 2):

> ⌘ As antidote to the poisons of the three emotions and in conformity with the capacities of individuals etc., the tantras are subdivided into father, mother and non-dual.

[160] This explanation is based on *Encyclopedia of Knowledge* by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul (op. 32, vol. 2: p. 613), which explains that the '*tantra* of the natural condition or of the primary cause' (*rang bzhin nam rgyu'i rgyud*) is the immutable nature of mind, common to sentient beings and Buddhas. The '*tantra* of the base or of the method' (*gzhi 'am thabs kyi rgyud*), that refers to secondary causes, comprises the way that comprehends the ripening initiation and the instructions that liberate: it is called 'base' because without it it is impossible to engender the 'fruit' of enlightenment. The '*tantra* of the fruit' (*'bras bu'i rgyud*) is the final realisation of the state of enlightenment.

The father tantras of yoga are those tantras which emphasise the creation stage or kyedrim and on the sundry ritual actions linked to it in connection with secondary practices, on the Illusory Wisdom Body related to (the aspect of) vision (and of) method[161], on the completion stage or dzogrim related to prana and on 'direct action'[162]. They have been transmitted mainly for individuals of irascible character and who love elaborate external activities.

The mother tantras of yoga are those tantras which give greater emphasis to the dzogrim stage than to kyedrim, to the aspect of prana and of emptiness than to that of method and of the yoga of Clear Light[163] as the means of its realisation, (to the) experiences of pleasure by means of (the secret instructions on) melting and reabsorbing the seed-essence regarding the Path of Method[164], and to 'conquest'[165] as the specific action. They have been transmitted mainly for those of a passionate nature who are able to practise the specific methods applied within their own bodies: that is to say individuals of medium capacity.

Finally, the non-dual tantras are those tantras in which there is balance between the aspects of method and of prajña and between the kyedrim and dzogrim stages, and which mainly consider that one's state of rigpa-bodhichitta[166], the single sphere of total wisdom of purity and equality, is the ultimate nature of all phenomena. They are intended for individuals dominated by ignorance and endowed with the higher capacity to apply the principle of freedom from effort.

[161] The Illusory Body (*sgyu lus*) is also one of the Six Yogas of Naropa.

[162] 'Direct action' (*mngon spyod*) denotes the fierce actions tied to the Karma family whose aim is to destroy evil beings by freeing their consciousness.

[163] The Clear Light (*'od gsal*) is also one of the Six Yogas of Naropa.

[164] The Path of Method (*thabs lam*) embraces practices tied to control of the subtle energies (*prāṇa*) and the seed-essence (*thig le*), such as the *gtum mo* or inner heat, the purpose of which is to 'melt' the *thig le* to enable its reabsorption in the various *cakras*.

[165] The activity of 'conquest' (*dbang*) pertains to the Padma family.

[166] Concerning the term *bodhicitta*, in the inner *tantras* and in particular in rDzogs chen it denotes the primordial state of the individual, pure from the beginning and perfectly endowed with all qualities, thus corresponding to absolute *bodhicitta* of the Mahāyāna *sūtra* tradition. The term *rig pa* alongside *bodhicitta* indicates that knowledge of the primordial state is a continuous living presence.

Some exponents of the modern Secret Mantra tradition maintain that, although all the higher tantras are equal inasmuch as they lead to (realisation of) the level of union (of method and prajña and of the kyedrim and dzogrim stages), according to whether the aspect of method or of prajña predominates that tantra should be classified as father tantra or mother tantra, respectively. Thus they assert that a father tantra can be distinguished from a mother tantra due to greater presence in the mandala of male than female deities and to whether or not it is possible for a female form to become the main deity; to the ornaments and attire of the deity; to the rotation in a clockwise or anticlockwise direction (of the mandala, the mantras, etc.); to the preference for the day rather than the night as the suitable moment to carry out the ritual actions; to the way to engage in the pure dimension, and so on.

Finally, other adherents of the modern tradition uphold the threefold subdivision of the inner tantras of Secret Mantra quoting the *Guhyasamaja* etc. as an example of the father tantras, the *Chakrasamvara* etc. as representative of the mother tantras, and the *Kalachakra* as a non-dual tantra. (In particular) they consider that (only) in the *Kalachakra* is the wisdom of the fourth initiation clearly revealed, which is (usually) concealed in the other tantras[167]. Moreover, as it does not evince the predominance of the aspect of method or that of prajña (this tantra) is also called the 'state of neutral realisation of Vajrasattva'[168], and as it emphasises non-duality and absolute equality it is also called 'the opening of the precious vase of enlightenment' and is praised in a quotation as the peak of all the series of tantras. ⌘

[167] The fourth or word initiation (*tshig dbang*) serves to reveal directly the ultimate nature of mind. See note 55.

[168] In Tibetan *rdo rje sems dpa' ma ning gi go 'phang.*

2.8.1. The classification in nine vehicles

In the ancient system or of the early translations the subdivision is into nine vehicles. These are:

· The three causal vehicles: the worldly vehicle of the Devas and human beings; the vehicle of the Shravakas and of the Pratyekabuddhas; the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas.

· The three series of outer tantras of Secret Mantra: Kriya Tantra; Ubhaya Tantra; Yoga Tantra.

- The three series of inner tantras: Mahayoga; Anuyoga; Atiyoga.

The worldly vehicle of the Devas and human beings can embrace manifold practice methods: methods in which one seeks by means of single-pointed concentration or by pranayama techniques to attain a state of peace or of wellbeing, ritual methods to obtain only the fleeting happiness of the higher states, and so on.

Even though in this instance the vehicle of the Shravakas and of the Pratyekabuddhas appears to be one single vehicle in fact it includes the two distinct vehicles of the Shravakas and of the Pratyekabuddhas. They are conjoined here in a single vehicle on account of the conformity of basic aspects of their views, as explained above.

The vehicle of the Bodhisattvas corresponds to what is usually called Mahayana.

Even though in general in the tantra traditions, both ancient and modern, the three vehicles of the Shravakas, of the Pratyekabuddhas and of the Bodhisattvas are codified as 'the three causal vehicles having philosophical characteristics' and classified as the first three of the nine vehicles, in the most ancient texts of the Nyingma tradition is found the classification given above which, consequently, can be seen to be particular to the ancient tradition.

As regards the manner of classification of the three series of outer tantras there are no important divergences between the Nyingma and Sarma traditions.

2.8.2. The three series of inner tantras

In the ancient or Nyingma tradition all the Anuttara Yoga Tantras are subdivided into the three series of inner tantras: Mahayoga or Great Yoga, Anuyoga or Higher Yoga, and Atiyoga or Supreme Yoga[169].

Mahayoga or Great Yoga corresponds almost entirely to the series of anuttaratantras of the modern tradition, as is demonstrated by the fact that many anuttaratantras such as the *Guhyasamaja* and the *Dasang thigle* are included among the eighteen principal tantras of Mahayoga. Anuyoga and Atiyoga, conversely, are teachings particular to the Nyingma tradition and are not found in other traditions.

2.8.3. The eighteen tantras of Mahayoga

The eighteen great tantras of Mahayoga comprise five root tantras, respectively of the Body, Voice, Mind, Qualities and Activities[170]; five tantras 'of manifestation' that disclose the way to practise the sadhana; five tantras regarding conduct; two supplementary tantras[171], plus a tantra that abridges the content of all the tantras. Thus in all we have eighteen fundamental tantras. Connected with these there are also many 'further' tantras, 'explanatory tantras' and so on.

The five tantras of the Body, Voice, Mind, Qualities and Activities are as follows.

The tantra of the Body is *The Tantra of the Unification of the Buddhas, the Root Tantra of the Bliss of the Dakinis (Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor gyi rtsa ba mkha' 'gro ma bde mchog rtsa ba'i rgyud).*

The tantra of the Voice is *The Root Tantra of the Essence of the Secret Moon (dPal Zla gsang thig le rtsa ba'i rgyud).*

[169] In Tibetan *rnal 'byor chen po, yongs su rnal 'byor* and *shin tu rnal 'byor*, respectively. At times the Tibetan correspondent of Anuyoga is *rjes su rnal 'byor* or 'subsequent *yoga*'.

[170] The body (*sku*), voice (*gsung*), mind (*thugs*), qualities (*yon tan*) and activities (*phrin las*) represent the five fundamental aspects of an enlightened being.

[171] In Tibetan *rtsa ba sku gsung thugs yon tan phrin las kyi rgyud chen po lnga, sgrub pa lag len du bstan pa rol pa'i rgyud chen po lnga, spyod pa'i yan lag tu 'gro ba'i rgyud chen po lnga, ma tshang kha bskong ba'i rgyud chen po gnyis*, respectively.

The tantra of the Mind is *Guhyasamaja* or *The Assembly of Secrets (dPal gSang ba 'dus pa).*

The tantra of the Qualities is *The First Supreme Glorious One (dPal mchog dang po).*

The tantra of the Activities is *The Garland of Actions (Kar ma ma le).*

The five tantras of manifestation that reveal how to practise the sadhana are as follows.

The tantra pertaining to the sadhana of the Body is *The Tantra of the Manifestation of the Heruka (He ru ka rol pa'i rgyud).*

The tantra pertaining to the sadhana of the Voice is *The Tantra of the Manifestation of the Supreme Horse (rTa mchog rol pa'i rgyud).*

The tantra pertaining to the sadhana of the Mind is *The Tantra of the Manifestation of Compassion (sNying rje rol pa'i rgyud).*

The tantra pertaining to the sadhana of the Qualities is *The Tantra of the Manifestation of Nectar (bDud rtsi rol pa'i rgyud).*

The tantra pertaining to the sadhana of the Activities is *The Tantra of the Twelve Phurbas (Byit to ta ma rol pa'i rgyud or Phur pa bcu gnyis).*

The five tantras concerning conduct are as follows.

The Tantra of the Mass of Mountains (Go 'phang dbang gis bgrod pa ri bo brtsegs pa'i rgyud).

The Tantra of Arrangement of the Samaya (gZhi dam tshigs gis bzung ba bkod pa rgyal po'i rgyud).

The Tantra of the Mighty Elephant ('Phang lta bas bcad pa glang po rab 'bog gi rgyud).

The Tantra that Conjoins Everything in a Single Point (Nyams su ting 'dzin gyis blangs pa rtse gcig bsdus pa'i rgyud).

The Tantra of the Terrifying Thunderbolt (La spyod pas dor ba rngam pa glog gi 'khor lo'i rgyud).

The two supplementary tantras are as follows.

The Net of Magical Manifestation of Vairochana (rNam par snang mdzad sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i rgyud), that contains instructions on the rituals of the mandalas and sadhanas for obtaining the siddhis.

The Lasso of the Method, the Lotus Garland Tantra (Thabs kyi zhags pa pad mo'i phreng ba'i rgyud), that contains supplementary instructions on all the 'actions'

The tantra that abridges the content of all the tantras is *The Net of the Magical Manifestation of Vajrasattva (rDo rje sems dpa' sgyu 'phrul drwa ba)*, also known as *Guhyagarbha* or *The Essence of Secrets (gSang ba snying po)*.

2.8.4. *The fundamental differences between the ancient and modern traditions and between Mahayoga and Anuyoga*

Even though the way and the method of kyedrim and of dzogrim of Mahayoga correspond to the anuttaratantras of the modern tradition this is the only main point that these two traditions have in common. In fact, the way of transformation based on the principle of instantaneous perfection, characteristic of Anuyoga, and the tantra, lung and upadesha scriptures of the way of self-liberation of Atiyoga were not propagated within the modern tradition, whence substantial differences can be found between the two traditions. In his *Summary of the Wish-fulfilling Treasury* (*Yid bzhin mdzod kyi grub mtha' bsdus pa*) Ju Mipham states (op. 24: p. 994, 2):

> ⌘ In the ancient tradition of Mantras, the Mahayoga Father Tantra, the Anuyoga Mother Tantra and the Atiyoga Non-dual Tantra are called the 'three series of inner tantras'. ⌘

However even though this statement may appear to endorse the correspondence between the three series based on fundamental character of the modern tantras and the three series of inner tantras of the ancient tradition, in reality I believe its meaning is that, just as in the modern tradition there are the father tantras, in the ancient tradition there is the Mahayoga; just as in the modern tradition there are the mother tantras, in the ancient tradition there is the Anuyoga; just as in the modern tradition there are the non-dual tantras, in the ancient tradition there is the Atiyoga, in the sense that the similarity lies more in the procedure

of classification in three series than in the actual contents. Thus, this passage should not be interpreted as signifying a total correspondence between the three tantras of the modern tradition and the three series of inner tantras of the ancient tradition. In fact, even though it is the case that as regards the predominance of the kyedrim or dzogrim stages the same difference obtains between the father and mother tantras of the modern tradition as between Mahayoga and Anuyoga, this is the crucial point distinguishing the father and mother tantras of the modern tradition but it is not the fundamental characteristic that differentiates the Mahayoga tantras from those of the Anuyoga.

In fact, even though these two great traditions of inner tantras are not different inasmuch as both are Secret Mantra ways of transformation, their actual difference lies in the fact that Mahayoga applies the kyedrim and dzogrim stages in a gradual manner while Anuyoga makes use of the principle of instantaneous self-perfection as the method in both kyedrim and dzogrim. It is precisely in these two approaches, which are crucial to the practice of Tantra and are fundamentally different, that the basic difference between Mahayoga and Anuyoga lies.

The mother tantras and the non-dual tantras of the modern tradition are entirely based on the practice of gradual transformation in their kyedrim and dzogrim stages and are utterly dissimilar from the method of instantaneous visualisation based on the principle of self-perfection found instead in Anuyoga. The non-dual tantras of the modern tradition, moreover, are only ways of gradual transformation of the kyedrim and dzogrim stages, which makes it even easier to understand their difference in principle from the way of self-liberation characteristic of Ati Dzogchen.

Then, concerning the relationship that exists between the three series of inner tantras Ju Mipham goes on to say (op. 24: p. 994, 2):

> ཞེས་ It is said that the Mahayoga creation system is like the base of all the teachings, the Anuyoga lung is like the path and the Atiyoga Perfection is like the fruit. In fact, in relation to the other two, Mahayoga, that is like the base of all the series of mantras, is like a (root) tantra; Anuyoga, that very clearly describes the profound methods to activate the channels and chakras within

the body, is like the path of Secret Mantra, and thus in relation to the tantra is like a lung that clarifies its main points; and Dzogpa Chenpo, that nakedly reveals the self-arising wisdom that is the fruit and aim of all the paths, is like the result or final goal of the path of Secret Mantra, and in relation to the two preceding (series) is deemed a tantra of secret instructions or upadesha. ꕥ

This passage demonstrates to what extent the three series of inner tantras are interrelated. In fact, practitioners of Dzogchen have always practised unifying the essence of these three series. For this fundamental reason those who have taken up the Dzogchen teaching must understand precisely the characteristics of the view, meditation, behaviour and fruit of the three series of inner tantras and be able to integrate their essential points in their practice of the profound path of Ati.

2.8.5. The ripening initiation, entrance gate to the three series of inner tantras

The entrance gate to the vehicles of the higher tantras must be opened through initiation. In fact, the profound initiation serves to give birth within us to the 'wisdom of the example' and to make us perfectly suitable vessels for the profound path (of Tantra). For this reason, if there are all the favourable conditions we should receive the initiation of the *Guhyagarbha*, fundamental for the Mahayoga; the initiation of the *Düpa Do ('Dus pa mdo)*, fundamental for the Anuyoga; and one of the fundamental initiations of Atiyoga such as that of the *Five Families of Samantabhadra*[172].

If this is not possible we should receive one of the initiations of Bhagavan Vajrasattva, the essence that embraces all the hundreds of manifestations of Tantra, according to the Mahayoga or the Anuyoga system, from (a teacher who holds) a transmission whose empowering

[172] In Tibetan *kun bzang rigs lnga'i dbang*: for example the *Don gsal sgron me* initiation belonging to the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (one of the *sNying thig ya bzhi*) or the *dBang gi spyi don snying po don sal* initiation belonging to the *Klong chen snying thig*. (O.N.)

energy has not undergone any deterioration. Or, the initiation of the *Self-liberation of Samsara and Nirvana through the Peaceful and Wrathful Manifestations*, an extraordinary upadesha tied to the 'short lineage'[173]. Or, finally, the ripening initiation of Guru Vajrasattva contained in the *Secret Treasure of the Vajra of Clear Light*[174], in the very elaborate or moderately elaborate form and strictly adhering to the original text.

Or, should it be difficult even to receive this it would be sufficient to receive a root initiation of Guru Vajrasattva, such as that called *The Initiation that Self-liberates Anyone Who Contacts It*[175] from a teacher with the right qualifications and in such a way as to enable the true meaning of the initiation to really be born within us. Only on this basis, in conclusion, can one properly engage in the view, meditation, behaviour and fruit of Mahayoga and Anuyoga.

After having properly opened our eyes by means of study, by reflection we will dispel all the uncertainties that cause doubt; and, finally, through the practice of the fundamental points of meditation we should actually obtain the various signs and realisations of the path. We need to engage in all this with diligence, and this is the correct order of progression that a practitioner should follow to enter into the supreme teaching of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo.

What has just been explained above is necessary to enable someone to render him or herself fit to practise all the diverse types of yoga in order to be able to engage in the unified essence of the deep methods of the three series of inner tantras.

2.8.5.1. The ultimate meaning of initiation

The ultimate meaning of all initiations is entry to the natural mandala of total perfection. But how is one to enter? *The Garland of Views* says (op. 21, A: p. 172, 2; B: p. 24, 7):

[173] *Zhi khro 'khor 'das rang grol*, a *gter ma* of Rig 'dzin Byang chub rDo rje (1826-1961).

[174] *'Od gsal rdo rje gsang mdzod*, a *gter ma* of A 'dzam 'Brug pa (1842-1934).

[175] *Phrad tshad rang grol*, belonging to the *'Od gsal rdo rje gsang mdzod* cycle.

⌘ All dharmas, being totally pure from the beginning, are the immense and absolutely indivisible chakra (mandala) of the divine wish-fulfilling palace. How to enter the supreme primordially existing mandala? Studying the teachings of the vehicle of the method[176] opens one's eyes; understanding the meaning, one sees the mandala; becoming familiar after having understood, one enters the mandala; having realised (the supreme sense) after having entered (the mandala), one obtains the great siddhi. ⌘

Rongzompa's commentary explains (op. 31: p. 261, 3):

⌘ In the lower vehicles one gradually enters the mandala made of coloured powder or of other materials: after having opened (the disciple's) eyes[177], displayed the true nature of the mandala and conferred the initiation (the teacher) bestows the possibility to start practising to obtain the siddhis. Here, however, we do not rely on all these things: the mandala one enters is the supreme mandala of the original condition of enlightenment of all phenomena. The way to enter consists in the three secrets. First of all, in fact, listening by means of the 'prajña of study' to the teaching of a teacher who transmits without error the Great Vehicle means opening one's eyes. Subsequently understanding the true sense by means of the prajña of reflection means seeing the mandala, that is, discerning the true quality of the deity. Having understood, becoming familiar (with this state) by means of the prajña of meditation means entering the mandala and receiving the initiation. Having entered (the mandala), realising (this state) means obtaining the great siddhi. ⌘

2.8.6. The fundamental principle of Mahayoga

The Garland of Views says (op. 21, A: p. 165, 1; B: p. 20, 4):

[176] In Tibetan *thabs kyi theg pa*, i.e. the inner *tantras*.

[177] This alludes to the phase of the initiation when, after having screened the disciples' eyes the teacher asks them to remove the band from their eyes to see the *maṇḍala* of the deity.

⌘ With regard to the method of 'creation', after having applied gradually the three contemplations one mentally creates the mandala step by step and one attains self-realisation by means of this meditation. ⌘

The three contemplations mentioned are: contemplation of the essential nature; contemplation of total vision; contemplation of the cause[178]. In *The Light of the Sun* Jamgön Kongtrul comments (op. 11: p. 311, 3):

⌘ Contemplation of the essential nature means abiding in a state of equanimous contemplation free of concepts, in a condition all-pervading as space.
Contemplation of total vision corresponds to the arising of impartial compassion, even though it is like a magical illusion, towards all beings that do not understand the essential nature.
Contemplation of the cause, which depends on the two preceding ones, consists in visualising a syllable, for example the letter HUM, as the essence of the wisdom of the state of rigpa, like a fish jumping out of clear water. ⌘

Furthermore, the *Self-arising State of Presence* tantra states (op. 29: p. 518, 40):

⌘ This is the Mahayoga system:
The entrance door is the three contemplations,
Understanding the view is recognising whatever appears as the male and female deities,
The basic samayas to keep concern the Body, Voice and Mind[179],

[178] In Tibetan *de bzhin nyid kyi ting nge 'dzin, kun tu snang ba'i ting nge 'dzin, rgyu'i ting nge 'dzin.*

[179] The *samaya* (*dam tshig*) is the promise or specific commitment that the practitioner must keep on receiving the Tantra teachings. The three basic *samayas* of Body, Voice and Mind (*dam tshig rtsa ba sku gsung thugs*) also denote not losing awareness of body, voice and mind as deity, *mantra* and state of *dharmakāya.*

The result is the state of method and prajña beyond union and separation[180].
These are the three contemplations:
Contemplation of the essential nature
Is a pure, limpid state without thought.
In contemplation of total vision
You meditate clearly and undistractedly.
Likewise in contemplation of the cause
You meditate on the three divine manifestations (*sattva*) that emanate from HUM, one within the other[181]
Visualise yourself as the samayasattva
Endowed with the 'four perfect conditions'[182].
Visualise the sattva of the syllable of contemplation
Endowed with the 'three clarities'[183].
The jñanasattvas are of two kinds,
Peaceful and wrathful.
This is how to do the contemplation of the cause[184]:
From YAM [there forms the mandala of air], from RAM [the mandala of fire], from KHAM [the mandala of water],
With RA [you visualise the ocean of blood], with SUM [the ground of gold], with KEM [Mount Meru made of skeletons],
With PAM [the thousand-petalled seat], with A [the moon disc that manifests from the A], with MA [the sun disc on top],

[180] Method (*thabs; upāya*) and *prajñā* (*shes rab*) in Tantra represent the two fundamental aspects of existence, corresponding to the objective manifestation of phenomena (method) and its nature of emptiness (*prajñā*). The aim of practice is realisation of their inseparability.

[181] In Tibetan *sems dpa'i gsum brtsegs*: first one visualises oneself as the *samayasattva*, then in one's heart one visualises the *jñānasattva*, and finally in the heart of the *jñānasattva* one visualises a letter or a very small form of Samantabhadra or Vajrasattva. (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu)

[182] In Tibetan *phun sum tshogs pa bzhi*. Usually five perfect conditions are mentioned, that are place, occasion, teacher, teaching and disciples.

[183] As regards the three clarities (*gsal ba rnam pa gsum*) of the '*sattva* of the syllable of contemplation' (*ting 'dzin yig 'bru sems dpa'*), these are the clarity of the form that appears, the clarity of the word pronounced and the clarity of the mind that remembers. (O.N.)

[184] The following description refers to the creation of the *maṇḍala* of a wrathful deity.

With HUM [the mantra SAM HARANA HUM you absorb (the rays)], with PHAT [the mantra SPHARANA PHAT] you radiate (the rays), etc.
Radiating infinite rays of light
From the seed syllable the proud [Yidam deity] manifests [on the seat],
Divine in form yet (at the same time) empty.
These are called 'the three contemplations'. ⌘

Thus we can clearly understand what the three contemplations are. Rongzompa's commentary states (op. 31: p. 241, 2):

⌘ One should not think that for adherents of this system consideration of the 'deity' is only with reference to the creation (of the pure vision). In fact (in Mahayoga) there exists the view concerning the self-perfected mandala in which cause and fruit are inseparable, even though when training in contemplation this is done in a gradual manner. In fact, according to the view of Great Yoga all phenomena are already enlightened in the mandala of [self-perfected] images[185] but three aspects of 'enlightenment' are discussed: enlightenment in nature, enlightenment in understanding and enlightenment in realisation[186]. Enlightenment in nature refers to sentient beings[187]. ⌘

[185] In Tibetan *gzugs brnyan gyi dkyil 'khor*: the *maṇḍala* presented during the initiation, on which one meditates to attain realisation, is the counterpart of the self-perfected *maṇḍala*. In general there are three *maṇḍalas* (*dkyil 'khor rnam pa gsum*): the self-perfected *maṇḍala* as the base, one's body (*gzhi lhun grub rtsa ba'i dkyil 'khor*); the *maṇḍala* of method of images as the path, the depictions of the *maṇḍala* with coloured powders or paints, etc. (*lam gzugs brnyan thabs kyi dkyil 'khor*); and the *maṇḍala* of the nature of purity as the fruit, contemplation (*'bras bu rnam dag rang bzhin gyi dkyil 'khor*). There is also the classification of *maṇḍala* of nature (*rang bzhin gyi dkyil 'khor*), *maṇḍala* of contemplation (*ting nge 'dzin gyi dkyil 'khor*) and *maṇḍala* of images (*gzugs brnyan gyi dkyil 'khor*).

[186] In Tibetan *rang bzhin sangs rgyas, rtogs pa'i sangs rgyas, grub pa'i sangs rgyas.*

[187] Enlightenment in nature, so called because it is common to all beings, is subdivided into three aspects or stages of evolution: the paternal and maternal causes (sperm and ovum) and consciousness; the physical and mental elements that produce the body structure; the body-mind system itself as support of the *maṇḍala* of the deities.

And (op. 31: p. 242, 4):

⌘ Enlightenment in understanding refers to the levels of the Vidyadharas[188] when one really understands this nature. Enlightenment in realisation refers to when one realises this very nature. In substance, one discerns its natural condition from the adventitious stages in which it appears. However, although in this and in other ways it is asserted that no phenomenon exists that is not already enlightened, in order to understand what has not been understood and to become familiar with what one is not familiar with it is deemed necessary to train one's mind for the three bhumis of enlightenment[189]. In fact, to train for the bhumi of Total Light one meditates in non-conceptual contemplation of the essential nature; to become familiar with the bhumi of the Lotus one meditates on the union of prajña and compassion through the contemplation of Total Vision. To become familiar with the bhumi of the Great Accumulation of the Chakra of Letters one meditates on the seed syllable of the contemplation of the Cause in order to then gradually create the mandala and become familiar with it[190]. ⌘

2.8.7. The fundamental principle of Anuyoga

The Garland of Views says (op. 21, A: p. 165, 2; B: p. 20, 5):

⌘ Regarding the method of 'completion', on the absolute plane one never separates from the unborn and uninterrupted (mani-

[188] There are four levels of Vidyādhara: Vidyādhara of complete maturity (*rnam smin gyi rig 'dzin*); long life Vidyādhara (*tshe dbang ba'i rig 'dzin*); Mahāmudrā Vidyādhara (*phyag rgya chen po'i rig 'dzin*); Vidyādhara of self-perfection (*lhun gyis grub pa'i rig 'dzin*).

[189] In Tibetan *kun tu 'od, pad ma can* and *yi ge 'khor lo tshogs chen.* See Chapter Eight: 2.

[190] The three contemplations are generally deemed methods to purify death, the intermediate state and rebirth, respectively, corresponding to the three dimensions of *dharmakāya, saṃbhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya.*

festation of the) male and female deities or from the ultimate dimension of phenomena, the medial condition that is the true meaning of the non-conceptual state. On the relative plane one clearly visualises the form dimension of the realised ones meditating in an equanimous but distinct way. In this way one attains self-realisation. ꕥ

Rongzompa's commentary states (op. 31: p. 243, 4):

ꕥ This (method) has been transmitted for those who have the capacity to meditate clearly and wholly in the single instantaneous presence of rigpa[191], the nature of bodhichitta, on all the aspects of meditation and practice according to the yoga tantra texts. This means that (while in general) one meditates on the non-conceptual state of the ultimate nature, on the illusory mandala of the deity[192], on the mandala of higher contemplation or on the mandalas of nature, of contemplation, of the images and so on[193], all these aspects that are explained separately are clearly perfected (here) in the same instant, just as a person endowed with miraculous powers can perform simultaneously and without incompatibility the four habitual activities[194]. To summarise (this point, it is said that) without separating from the two (aspects) there is the clarity of the one; inseparable as one, it is clearly distinct in three (points).
Thus the perfection of the instantaneous presence of rigpa is called the 'method of completion'. "Without separating from the two (aspects)" refers to:
- Not separating from the sense that all animate and inanimate phenomena are the state of self-perfection of enlightenment in the self-perfected mandala of the images as the nature of the absolute beyond birth and cessation.

[191] In Tibetan *rig pa skad cig ma*, pure non-conceptual, non-dual instantaneous presence that constitutes the specific feature of the path of rDzogs chen Atiyoga.
[192] In Tibetan *sgyu ma lha'i dkyil 'khor*: the illusory *maṇḍala* of the deity with the depiction of all the symbolic attributes.
[193] See note 185.
[194] The four activities (*spyod lam rnam bzhi*) are: sitting, walking, eating and sleeping.

- Not separating from the state of understanding of the 'medial condition'[195] of the ultimate nature of phenomena (*dharmadhātu*), the absolute that transcends concepts. Without separating (from these two), one meditates clearly on the aggregates, constituents and sense bases in the mandala of higher contemplation: this is called the 'single clarity'

"(Abiding) inseparable as one" means understanding that whatever appears or one meditates on is inseparable in the dimension (of emptiness) of bodhichitta beyond birth and cessation, the ultimate nature (of phenomena).

"(The) three clearly distinct (points)" are: even though one meditates on the mandala in which everything is self-perfected, (the specific meditation) is clearly distinct from other contemplations; even though the colours and attributes (of the deity) etc. manifest clearly in the mandala of higher contemplation they are clearly distinct from those of other (deities); the manifestations of the central deity, consort and surrounding retinue must be clearly distinct. These are the three clearly distinct points.

If one is able to engage in this contemplation effortlessly on the basis of the principle of self-perfection, integrating space and time in the condition of absolute equality, then it is no different from the method of Dzogpa Chenpo. However here one does not really have this capacity because effort is applied in directing the presence of rigpa in a certain direction and the instantaneous state within a (limited) period of time, which entails fragmentariness. Thus one engages in this manner in order to perfect all aims in the single instantaneous presence of rigpa. ཨཿ

The essence of Anuyoga is concisely expressed in the *Self-arising State of Presence* tantra (op. 29: p. 520, 2):

ཨཿ The great lung[196] (tradition) of the Anuyoga vehicle

[195] The medial condition (*dbu ma*), characteristic of the Madhyamaka tradition, indicates overcoming all conceptual limits, in particular the extremes of eternalism and nihilism.

[196] In Tibetan *lung chen*. On the basis of the classification in *rgyud, lung* and *man ngag*, Anuyoga is usually defined as *lung*. See above, 2.8.4.

Speaks of the vajra of the state of inseparability
Of the ultimate dimension and wisdom.
Entry can be direct or gradual.
Understanding of the view is the state beyond union and separation.
In direct entry
The deities, without needing to be visualised gradually, are perfected by remembering the essence.
In gradual entry
One enters progressively into the ultimate dimension and into wisdom
And finally attains the fruit of the level of Vajradhara[197]. ⌘

Concerning the principle of the ultimate dimension and of wisdom[198], there is a clear and comprehensive explanation in *Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle* by Longchenpa (op. 14: p. 142, 4):

⌘ Regarding the ultimate dimension and wisdom as the base of liberation, the ultimate dimension is emptiness that transcends thought inasmuch as it is devoid of any created phenomenon, effort or change. When self-arising wisdom, that is like its substance, arises in it one understands that all phenomena are total self-liberation in the condition of the base: this is called 'the wisdom and the ultimate dimension of effortless self-liberation'[199].

Regarding the ultimate dimension and wisdom of the path that is the variety of appearances, when everything that manifests in the variety arises as the unlimited manifestation of energy all of this variety self-liberates without interruption. Thus in the ultimate dimension (that serves as base) of the manifestations of single phenomena of self-perfection there arises the wisdom of the pure magical illusion that transcends all limits (of uniqueness). In this way one understands that all phenomena are be-

[197] In Tibetan *rdo rje 'dzin pa'i sa.*
[198] In Tibetan *dbyings* and *ye shes.*
[199] In Tibetan *'bad med rang grol gyi dbyings dang ye shes.*

yond acceptance and rejection, beyond affirmation and refutation and beyond all craving: this is called 'the ultimate dimension and wisdom of the completeness of the state of self-perfection'[200].

Regarding the ultimate dimension and wisdom of the fruit that is total self-liberation beyond action, the ultimate dimension, that does not abide in samsara or in nirvana, is single, indefinable and beyond striving. When empty wisdom arises in it, beyond the limits of view and meditation, one understands the sameness of all phenomena of happiness and of suffering: this is called 'the ultimate dimension and wisdom of dharmata beyond action'[201]. ⌘

2.8.8. The fundamental principle of Atiyoga [202]

The Garland of Views says (op. 21, A: p. 165, 4; B: p. 20, 6):

⌘ In the method of Total Perfection one understands that all dharmas of the mundane and supramundane spheres are inseparable and from the beginning have the nature of the mandala of the Body, Voice and Mind: one meditates (with this understanding). ⌘

Rongzompa's commentary explains (op. 31: p. 248, 8):

⌘ All phenomena conditioned by the passions, including the causes and effects of samsara, and all the phenomena of total purification, including the causes and effects of nirvana, are said

[200] In Tibetan *lhun grub rdzogs tshul gyi dbyings dang ye shes.*

[201] In Tibetan *chos nyid bya ba las 'das pa'i dbyings dang ye shes.*

[202] As will be made clear below, in this section, based on *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*, the rDzogs chen view is expounded through concepts and terms characteristic of Mahāyoga, in particular of the *Guhyagarbha tantra*, hence there are passages devoted to the four understandings, the four branches of approach and attainment and other aspects of tantric practice.

to be 'inseparable'. But what does separation mean? And what does there not being separation mean? 'Separation' refers to the distinction of the diverse characteristics of phenomena, for example the characteristics of absolute truth and of relative truth, the particular and general characteristics of any phenomenon, the characteristics of the white and the black of a phenomenon: all of this can be analysed saying one thing or another and in this way one can draw distinctions between all the phenomena of the universe. What does it mean, that phenomena cannot be separated? (It means) that they are inseparable in the nature of the mandala of the Body, Voice and Mind in the same way that, for example, all the characteristic definitions of the worldly schools, of the Mutegpas and of ordinary people, are comprised without any distinction whatsoever within the characteristic of 'dharma' (or phenomena) as explained by the Buddhists. But why are they inseparable? Because their very nature is such from the very beginning and cannot be sullied by conjectures intended to add or remove something (from the true nature) or by effort. This concisely explains the view of Dzogpa Chenpo. ꕥ

The Garland of Views goes on to say (op. 21, A: p. 165, 5; B: p. 20, 7):

ꕥ In fact the (*Guhyagarbha*) tantra[203] says:
The components of the Vajra aggregates
Are called the Five Perfect Buddhas.
All the various sense bases and constituents
Are the mandala of the Bodhisattvas.
Earth and water are Lochana and Mamaki,
Fire and air are Pandaravasini and Tara,
Space is Dhatvishvari:
The three spheres of existence are pure from the beginning.

Thus all the phenomena of samsara and nirvana have never been born, and as their capacity to act, similar to a magical illusion,

[203] The following quotation is taken from chapter two of *Guhyagarbha* (op. 35: p. 12, 6).

from the beginning is the nature of the ten father and mother Buddhas etc., all dharmas are by their own nature nirvana: the five great elements are the nature of the five Mothers; the five aggregates are the Buddhas of the five families; the four consciousnesses are the nature of the four Bodhisattvas; the four objects are the nature of the four Enchanting Goddesses; the four senses are the nature of the four Bodhisattvas; the four times are the nature of the four Offering Goddesses; the sense of the body, its consciousness, its object and the bodhichitta which derives from it are the nature of the four Wrathful Males; the four limits of eternalism and nihilism are the nature of the four Wrathful Females; the mind consciousness is the nature of bodhichitta Vajra Samantabhadra; the objects (of consciousness), whether compounded or non-compounded, are the nature of Samantabhadri, the objective sphere of existence.
All of this is the nature of perfect enlightenment from the beginning and not the result of effort on a path. ⌘

All of this has been clearly explained on the basis of the *Guhyagarbha* tantra.

In fact, from the beginning the great mandala of the Vajra Body is the nature of the Buddhas of the five families in union:

Vairochana and Lochana,
Ratnasambhava and Mamaki,
Amitabha and Pandaravasini,
Amoghasiddhi and Samaya Tara,
Akshobhya and Dhatvishvari.

The five elements are the nature of the five Consort-mothers:
The nature of earth is Buddha Lochana,
The nature of water is Mamaki,
The nature of fire is Pandaravasini,
The nature of air is Samaya Tara,
The nature of space is Dhatvishvari.

The five aggregates are the nature of the five Buddha-fathers:
The aggregate of form is Vairochana,

The aggregate of sensation is Ratnasambhava,
The aggregate of perception is Amitabha,
The aggregate of mental formations is Amoghasiddhi,
The aggregate of consciousness is Akshobhya.

The four consciousnesses are the nature of the four Bodhisattvas:
The consciousness of sight is Kshitigarbha,
The consciousness of hearing is Vajrapani,
The consciousness of smell is Akashagarbha,
The consciousness of taste id Avalokiteshvara.

The four sense objects are the nature of the four Enchanting Goddesses:
Form, the object of sight, is Vajra Lasyema,
Sound, the object of hearing, is Vajra Girtima,
Odour, the object of smell, is Vajra Malema,
Flavour, the objet of taste, is Vajra Nirtima[204]

The four senses are the nature of the four Bodhisattvas:
The sense of sight is Maitreya,
The sense of hearing is Nirvaranavishkambhin,
The sense of smell is Samantabhadra,
The sense of taste is Manjushri.

The four times are the four Offering Goddesses:
The events of the past are Dhupa,
The events of the present are Pushpa,
The events of the future are Aloka,
The equality of the fourth (indeterminate) time is Gandha[205]
According to some traditions the four times are identified with the four seasons: summer, winter, autumn and spring.

[204] The four Enchanting Goddesses (*mdzes pa'i lha mo bzhi*), that symbolise the sense objects, are the consorts of the four Bodhisattvas that represent the four consciousnesses.
[205] The four Offering Goddesses (*mchod pa'i lha mo bzhi*) are the consorts of the four Bodhisattvas that represent the sense faculties.

The sense of the body, its consciousness, its object and the bodhichitta derived from it are the nature of the four Wrathful Males: Hayagriva, Yamantaka, Mahabala and Amritakundali[206], respectively.

The four limits of eternalism and nihilism are the nature of the four Wrathful Females:

The limit of eternalism is Ankusha,
The limit of nihilism is Pasha,
The limit of ego is Shrinkhala,
The limit of a concrete characteristic is Ganta[207]

Furthermore, the commentary to the *Guhyagarbha* called *The Essence of the Sun (Nyi ma'i snying po)* states (op. 9: p. 180, 2):

⌘ *The components of the Vajra aggregates are called the five perfect Buddhas*: in the state of self-arising wisdom, that is in real understanding of the five aggregates and their components[208], the uninterrupted (manifestation spontaneously) perfects the accumulation of merit; not having concepts in this regard (spontaneously) perfects the accumulation of wisdom, all of which (takes place) directly and instantaneously.
Buddha refers exactly to this perfecting: when the consideration of the two limits (of being and non-being) dissolves of itself without having to be rejected not even the slightest hindrance to knowledge remains: thus one says 'purified'; as boundless wisdom endowed with the two qualities of omniscience becomes equal to the indivisible (vastness) of the ultimate dimension of phenomena, it is called 'expanded'[209].

[206] The four Wrathful Males (*khro bo bzhi*) and the four Wrathful Females (*khro mo bzhi*) are the wrathful guardians of the *maṇḍala*.

[207] In Tibetan *rtag chad mu bzhi*: the four limits of eternalism (*rtag pa*), nihilism (*chad pa*), of a self or independent entity (*bdag*), of a concrete characteristic (*mtshan ma*).

[208] I.e. all the elements belonging to the group of the five *skandhas*.

[209] The Tibetan term that translates the Sanskrit word Buddha is *sangs rgyas*, that literally means 'purified and expanded'.

Five means that the condition of the five fundamental aggregates, being pure as explained, is self-arising and self-perfected wisdom spontaneously manifesting: thus it appears as the five wisdoms[210]. In front of beings to be tamed, the five wisdoms appear as the five families: the uninterrupted manifestation of form as Vairochana; the aggregate of sensation as Ratnasambhava; perception as Amitabha; mental formations as Amoghasiddhi; consciousness as Vajrasattva[211]. The correspondence of their symbolism and meanings is as explained in other texts[212].
The expression *are called* is used as if with the intention to define clearly their true essence.
All the various sense bases and constituents are the mandala of the Bodhisattvas: at the time of dualistic thought the sense bases are twelve, the sense constituents are eighteen. As regards the sense bases, through the organ of sight the consciousness (of sight) arises and thus the (visible) object develops; applying this to the other senses in all we have twelve (bases). As regards the eighteen sense constituents, twelve of them are those just explained above starting from the constituents of sight, form and the consciousness of sight, added to which there is (the triad of) body, body consciousness and touchable objects and the (triad of) mind, mind consciousness and their objects, which are compounded and non-compounded phenomena[213].
The expression *all the various* refers to the numerous sense constituents and bases that represent the essence of experience of

[210] The five wisdoms (*ye shes lnga*) are: wisdom of the fundamental condition of existence or *dharmadhātu* (*chos dbyings ye shes*); mirror-like wisdom (*me long lta bu'i ye shes*); wisdom of equality (*mnyam nyid ye shes*); discriminating wisdom (*sor rtogs ye shes*); action-accomplishing wisdom (*bya grub ye shes*). (O.N.)

[211] In this case Vajrasattva is synonymous with Akṣobhya.

[212] In fact often there are incongruities between the correspondences. Although the five *yum* are always associated with the same elements, the characteristics of certain Tathāgatas and their associations with the various elements and *skandhas* do not always concur in the sundry texts.

[213] This explanation of the twelve *āyatanas* and of the eighteen *dhātus* diverges from the more generally accepted one and seems to originate from the *tantra* itself.

the four times, of the four limits of eternalism and nihilism and of the three aspects of the body[214]

Concerning *the mandala of the Bodhisattvas*: as the five aggregates, as already explained, are pure, in the same way that the sun illuminates the earth in an instant the self-arising wisdom of rigpa having the three qualities[215] is self-perfected and thus, being pure in its roots is also pure in its ramifications. Thus the aggregates and the constituents manifest naturally as the basic dimensions or kayas and as wisdom[216] in the mandala of male and female Bodhisattvas. In fact, as written in the introductory chapter (of the *Guhyagarbha*)[217], the four consciousnesses are the four Bodhisattvas of the directions, the four senses in their pure aspect are the four Bodhisattvas of the intermediate dimensions, the four objects of the senses are the Consorts of Kshitigarbha etc. The four times are the four Consorts of the four Bodhisattvas of the intermediate directions such as Maitreya etc. The three aspects of the body plus the consciousness of touch[218], making four, are the four Wrathful Males. The four limits of eternalism and nihilism are the four Wrathful Females. Mind is Samantabhadra, the object of mind as compounded or non-compounded phenomenon is Samantabhadri. One might think: "If all of this is the 'mandala of the Bodhisattvas' why does it contain manifestations of fierce male and female deities of such cruel and ravenous mien? Why is there talk of 'Bodhisattvas'?" The reason is that the means of taming manifests according to the characteristics of the beings to be tamed. So, even though it appears in this way to coarse and evil people, peaceful individuals (recognise) that even though it may mani-

[214] I.e. the body as the instrument of touch (*reg byed*), touch (*reg pa*) and touchable objects (*reg bya*).

[215] In Tibetan *chos gsum*, here meaning the three aspects of senses, consciousness and objects. (O.N.)

[216] The basic dimensions (*sku*) where the infinite manifestation of wisdom (*ye shes*) takes place.

[217] The first chapter of *Guhyagarbha* (op. 35: pp. 9, 3ff).

[218] In Tibetan *reg shes*, i.e. the *bodhicitta* derived from the first three.

fest in fierce guise the true state (of the deity) is no different from (that of) the Bodhisattvas.

Earth and water are Lochana and Mamaki, fire and air are Pandaravasini and Tara, space is Dhatvishvari: this refers to the essence of the Buddha, naturally present as the purity of the five elements in the eight petals of the channels of the chakra of existence that dwells in the heart. The channel of the pure essence of the earth element is by nature like a thread of white silk; the pure essence of blood is like vermilion; the pure essence of heat is like the warmth that forms on the surface of a mirror placed in the sun; the pure essence of the breath is like the vapour of gold underground; the pure essence of space is the indestructible sphere of life small as a pea that being colourless can appear in any manner. If understood by the yogin through meditation, this is the essence of the Buddhas and precisely this is meant when it is said that all beings have the Buddha essence[219]. When this understanding is totally actualised the impure elements are purified and the purified elements of the outer world manifest as the space of the sky. If it is not understood, the five elements of wisdom, that are the inner purity, are judged and divided by the consciousness into subject and object and so, having space as their base they manifest as the impure elements of samsara: earth, water, fire, air and space. However as their fundamental cause or base is the same as explained above they always remain the spontaneous manifestation of the nature of mind. Thus when clearly recognised as the inseparability of vision and emptiness, earth, water, fire, air and space are purified in their own condition and (manifest) self-perfected in the true nature of mind, absolute equality. Thus the five elements, inseparable from (the process of) creation[220], generating the five aggregates are called

[219] The *sūtras* of the third turning of the wheel of Dharma often discuss the Buddha nature or *tathāgatagarbha* present in all beings without exception.

[220] In *bskyed rim* practice the creation of the *maṇḍala* begins with the gradual manifestation of the five elements, starting with the air element that forms on the base of space.

'mothers' but are also called 'consorts'[221] because they are inseparable from the five aggregates and cannot be severed from them. So, the purified aspect of earth is Buddha Lochana, consort of Vairochana; the purified aspect of water is Mamaki, consort of Ratnasambhava; the purified aspect of fire is Pandaravasini, consort of Amitabha; the purified aspect of air is Samaya Tara, consort of Amoghasiddhi; the purified aspect of space is Samantabhadri[222], consort of Vajrasattva.

As the aggregates, sense bases and constituents manifest as the base dimension and wisdom, it is written: *From the beginning the three spheres of existence are the pure dimension of Enlightenment*[223]. The three spheres of existence are the passion, form and formless worlds. All the various phenomena of the relative tied to it, which arise, exist, dissolve and have the characteristic of possessing infinite particularities within, are always based on the aggregates, sense bases and constituents. However when they manifest as the natural clarity of the great wisdom of the inseparable state of one's rigpa-nature of mind, and when the original condition is recognised for what it is, one speaks of 'pure dimension of Enlightenment'. Whatever manifests as the vision of the rigpa-nature of mind appears yet at the same time is not something concrete: this is nirmanakaya that helps beings according to their wishes. The essence that has never arisen and never been born, self-perfected in the ultimate dimension of phenomena, is dharmakaya. This very state in which the whole dimension of 'richness' of samsara and nirvana manifests as a single thing, distinct and complete, is sambhogakaya. So, the three worlds are nothing other than the pure dimension of the three kayas, and not even their name exists. ꕥ

And Rongzompa's commentary explains (op. 31: p. 250, 6):

[221] The Tibetan word *yum* can also mean consort.

[222] In this case Samantabhadrī is synonymous with Dhātvīśvari.

[223] In Tibetan *srid gsum ye nas sangs rgyas zhing*: this is the original quotation from *Guhyagarbha* (op. 35: p. 13, 2). The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* instead cites *srid gsum ye nas rnam par dag.*

⌘ As regards *the components of the vajra aggregates*, in the Secret Mantra system the aggregates are called 'Vajra aggregates' and the sense bases 'Vajra sense bases' because they have the same nature as the vajra-like deity, of Body, Voice and Mind. As regards the *sense of the body, its consciousness, its object and the bodhichitta which derives from it*, the object corresponds to Body, the sense organ to Voice, consciousness to Mind, according to the explanations of the teachers of the past. As regards *the bodhichitta which derives from it*, according to the Kham System[224] this refers to the mind constituent that arises consequent on the consciousness of the body. Conversely, according to the Central System this refers to the sensation that ensues on bodily contact. It is explained in any case that this corresponds to the bodhichitta that experiences the pleasure of the indissoluble union of method and prajña. ⌘

And (op. 31: p. 251, 6):

⌘ *The nature of bodhichitta Vajra Samantabhadra* means that the nature of mind, being bodhi, is like the vajra, and as there is nothing to abandon or to reject in any situation or circumstance it is called Samantabhadra (always good). ⌘

The Garland of Views goes on to say (op. 21, A: p. 167, 1; B: p. 21, 6):

⌘ Thus the ten directions, the three times, the three worlds etc., all compounded and non-compounded phenomena do not exist apart from one's mind. In fact it is said:

Clear understanding of one's mind
Is actually the Buddhas' enlightenment![225]

[224] In Tibetan *khams lugs*, an exegetical tradition originating in east Tibet, different from the central Tibetan tradition (*dbus lugs*) quoted below.

[225] In Tibetan *sangs rgyas byang chub de nyid do*: according to some interpretations the term *byang chub* is a contraction of *byang chub sems dpa'*, Bodhisattva. Thus the phrase could be rendered: Is itself the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas!

It actually is the three worlds!
It actually is the great elements!⌘

The verses quoted above are from the *Conqueror of the Three Worlds (Khams gsum rnam rgyal gyi rtogs pa)*. Rongzompa's commentary says (op. 31: p. 252, 4):

> ⌘ *Clear understanding of one's mind* means understanding perfectly the nature of one's mind. In this regard the (customary) explanation is that when the mind is deluded this is samsara while when it has understanding and is no longer deluded this is enlightenment (*bodhi*), but this does not correspond to the Dzogchen tradition as it is also confirmed by the lesser vehicles. So here [where the true Dzogchen tradition is explained] one must understand that, even though all phenomena appear as mind, appearance itself is the nature of enlightenment of the Buddhas. ⌘

The next passage from *The Garland of Views* quotes instead from the *Guhyasamaja* (op. 21, A: p. 167, 3; B: p. 21, 7):

⌘ In fact it is said:

All dharmas abide in the mind,
The mind abides in space,
Space abides nowhere.

Moreover:

All dharmas are fundamentally empty,
All dharmas are utterly pure from the beginning,
All dharmas are entirely luminous clarity,
All dharmas are by nature nirvana,
All dharmas are perfect enlightenment.

Just this is Total Perfection (Dzogpa Chenpo). ⌘

Rongzompa's commentary adds (op. 31: p. 253, 2):

⌘ The meaning of this (quotation) is that all phenomena pertain to mind and that the nature of mind is like space: the nature of space, in fact, is that it is devoid of characteristics.
We then find other quotations with the same meaning, such as *all dharmas are fundamentally empty* and so on. *All dharmas*, as they cannot at all be confirmed as either subject or object, *are fundamentally empty*, but not in the sense of something being empty of something else. In the same way, as the impurities of the passions have never existed, they *are utterly pure from the beginning*. As the darkness of the obstacles has never existed, they *are entirely luminous clarity*. As hindrances cannot be separated from their antidotes, they *are by nature nirvana*. Beyond decreasing the two obstacles and completing the two accumulations, from the beginning *they are perfect enlightenment*. The sense of Dzogchen is explained in all of these ways. ⌘

2.8.9. The way to enter the total perfection of Ati

(According to *The Garland of Views*) there are three doors that permit entry to the total perfection of Ati: the four understandings, the three characteristics, the four approaches and attainments[226].

2.8.9.1. The four understandings

Regarding the four understandings, *The Garland of Views* says (op. 21, A: p. 167, 6; B: p. 22, 2):

⌘ One needs to acquire certainty in the method of Total Perfection through the way of the four understandings [the method of

[226] The four understandings (*rtogs pa rnam ba bzhi*), the three characteristics (*mtshan nyid gsum*) and the four approaches and attainments (*bsnyen sgrub yan lag bzhi*) are treated in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of *Guhyagarbha*.

Total Perfection means (naturally) perfecting the accumulation of merit and of wisdom and the self-perfected (manifestation) of the fruit, or the method that achieves this goal].
The four understandings are: understanding of the single cause; understanding through the nature of the letters; understanding through empowerment; direct understanding[227]. ꙮ

As for understanding the single cause, *The Garland of Views* says (op. 21, A: p. 168, 2; B: p. 22, 4):

ꙮ Concerning the understanding of the single cause: in the absolute sense all dharmas have never been born whence they have no distinctions whatsoever, and even at the relative level since they have the qualities of illusoriness they have no distinctions whatsoever. This unborn condition manifests illusorily in a manifold manner like the reflection of the moon in water and has the capacity to enter into action, (but) this same illusory manifestation, not having any self-nature, has never been born. Thus, since it is not possible to separate the absolute from the relative one understands that (everything) has a single cause. ꙮ

And, regarding the understanding through the nature of the letters (op. 21, A: p. 168, 4; B: p. 22, 5):

ꙮ Understanding through the nature of the letters: all dharmas (being) unborn are A and thus are the nature of the Voice.
This unborn condition manifests in an illusory manner and has the capacity to enter into action: this is O, the nature of the Body.
Rigpa which perceives this state, the illusory wisdom that has neither centre nor boundaries, is (O)M[228], the nature of Mind.
Such is the way to understand (this). ꙮ

[227] In Tibetan *rgyu gcig par rtogs pa, yig 'bru'i tshul gyi rtogs pa, byin gyis rlabs kyis rtogs pa, mngon sum par rtogs pa*, respectively. Rong zom pa's commentary (op. 31: p. 254, 4) specifies that the first two understandings concern the object to recognise, the third comprises the method and the fourth corresponds to the fruit.

[228] The text has the letter OṂ, but probably it should be understood to mean the *anusvāra* sign that causes a terminal nasalisation, usually rendered by an m with a dot underneath.

And regarding the understanding through empowerment (op. 21, A: p. 168, 5; B: p. 22, 6):

⌘ Understanding through empowerment: in the same way that madder has the capacity to 'empower' white cotton dying it red, one understands that all dharmas can be empowered in (the manifestation of) the state of enlightenment through the power of the single cause and of the nature of the letters. ⌘

And finally, regarding direct understanding (op. 21, A: p. 169, 1; B: p. 22, 7):

⌘ Direct understanding: (asserting) that from the very beginning all dharmas abide in the state of enlightenment does not contradict either the scriptures or the upadeshas, (however one speaks of) 'direct understanding' when without relying only on the words of the scriptures and of the upadeshas one has certainty about them in the depths of one's own mind through one's own rigpa. ⌘

Furthermore (op. 21, A: p. 169, 2; B: p. 23, 2):

⌘ As regards (acquiring) certainty through the path, recognition itself of the true sense of the four understandings is the path of the yogin. It is not based on something like (waiting for) the moment in which the fruit manifests as a result of practice but is certainty derived from one's own direct (and immediate) knowledge. ⌘

Rongzompa's commentary explains (op. 31: p. 255, 3):

⌘ (Concerning the meaning of Total Perfection), 'perfection' refers to perfecting the two accumulations and 'total' to the fact that, unlike the lesser vehicles in which a gradual path is applied, from the beginning Body, Voice and Mind are the self-perfected fruit. The means or door for entering this state is called 'method'.

As regards the four understandings, understanding the single cause means understanding the single nature and does not imply the existence of a single cause able to produce anything or a logical justification. That in the absolute all phenomena are unborn and consequently indistinguishable and in the relative are likewise indistinguishable inasmuch as they are like a magical illusion is an explanation common to the Mahayana, so the terminology of the two truths is used. The special characteristic here lies in the inseparability of the two truths.

Understanding through the nature of the letters serves instead to understand the state of enlightenment according to the teaching of the fruit of Secret Mantra. In fact the three letters are the door to enter liberation, and Body, Voice and Mind being the state of self-perfection of the fruit they are also the true sense of liberation. In fact, A is the door of the unborn, O is the door of origination of the miraculous manifestation and (O)M is the door of non-duality.

Understanding through empowerment concerns the power derived from the first two understandings.

Direct understanding is based on the faculty of prajña and not on other types of direct perception. For example, in order to identify gold it is cut, seared and polished. By searing it one ascertains whether or not it is gold. By cutting it one ascertains whether it contains impurities. By polishing it with a black stone one ascertains whether or not it is of good quality. In the same way in order definitively to establish knowledge of the true sense, similar to gold, if there is no contradiction with the scriptures in general then there is no mistake: this is like examining gold by searing it. If in the scriptures there are phrases that are not literal in meaning, profound explanations about the true meaning or passages that are difficult to understand, all these faults (in understanding) can be eliminated through the upadeshas of the teachers: this is like examining gold by cutting it. However if, even without there being contradictions with the scriptures and the upadeshas only the words are followed without acquiring concrete experience in the depth of one's own mind then this

fault must be eliminated, and without following only the words of the scriptures and the upadeshas one must achieve certainty and direct understanding in the depth of one's mind: this is like examining gold by polishing it. This direct (understanding) refers to the moment (of arising) of discriminating prajña. When this is realised through the power of one's practice this is called the 'fruit'. ⌘

2.8.9.2. The three characteristics

Concerning the way to realise the final goal of Total Perfection through the three characteristics[229], *The Garland of Views* says (op. 21, A: p. 169, 4; B: p. 23, 2):

⌘ Through the three characteristics one realises the final goal: recognition of the principle of the four understandings is the characteristic of knowledge; becoming ever more familiar with it is the characteristic of application; realisation through the power of such familiarity is the characteristic of the fruit. ⌘

2.8.9.3. Connection, necessity and supreme necessity

Having elucidated the three characteristics of knowledge, of application and of the fruit, the text proceeds to explain that the three characteristics also elucidate the connection, necessity and supreme necessity of Total Perfection (op. 21, A: p. 169, 5; B: p. 23, 3):

⌘ The three characteristics evince the connection, necessity and supreme necessity.

[229] According to Rong zom pa's commentary (op. 31: p. 254, 5) the characteristic of knowledge (*shes pa'i mtshan nyid*) concerns the object to recognise, the characteristic of application (*'jug pa'i mtshan nyid*) concerns the method and the characteristic of the fruit (*'bras bu'i mtshan nyid*) concerns the result of realisation.

The connection: recognising that all dharmas defined as entirely conditioned by the emotions or totally purified from the beginning are the state of Body, Voice and Mind, that by their very nature they are the ultimate dimension of enlightenment and that (they can thus be) empowered[230] is the characteristic of knowledge, the cause. It is connected to the fact that it can constitute the cause of realisation of supreme enlightenment.

The necessity: maintaining behaviour beyond acceptance and rejection in relation to all dharmas that are either entirely conditioned by the emotions or are totally purified and those that are defined as the five medicines and the five nectars[231] etc., (recognising) their original and absolute equality in the state of enlightenment, is the characteristic of application. Being the cause of realisation of supreme enlightenment, it constitutes the necessity.

The supreme necessity: as all dharmas, either entirely conditioned by the emotions or totally purified, and those particularly defined as the five medicines, five nectars etc., are self-perfected in the absolute equality of the original state of enlightenment without having to be accepted or rejected, from the very beginning the wheel of transmigration is the nature of supreme enlightenment, spontaneously perfected in the characteristics pertaining to nirvana: this is the characteristic of the fruit. Thus realisation of the chakra of the inexhaustible ornaments of Body, Voice and Mind constitutes the supreme necessity. ⌘

[230] In Tibetan *byin rlabs pa'i don rtogs pa.*

[231] In general the 'five medicines' (*sman lnga*) denote the following medicinal substances: *sle tres* (Tinospora cordifolia), *rgya mtsho lbu ba* (Erythenia indica), *kandakari* (Rubus idaeopsis), *dbang po lag pa* (Orchis latifolia), *shu dag dkar po* (Acorus calamus). The five nectars (*bdud rtsi lnga*) are: faeces, urine, blood, flesh and sperm. (O.N.) According to commentaries to the *Guhyagarbha* the five medicines are used to purify the five objects of enjoyment by the senses and the five nectars are taken to purify the five elements. In this context, however, their significance is related to the basic dualism (in which there co-exist the concepts of pure and impure, the five poisons of the passions and the five corresponding antidotes etc.) which has to be overcome by means of tantric practice.

Thus we have read how through the three characteristics one can understand the true meaning of connection, necessity and supreme necessity.

Rongzompa's commentary adds (op. 31: p. 257, 6):

⌘ The three characteristics show the connection, necessity and supreme necessity. This refers to the connection, necessity and supreme necessity of the path. Recognising the principle of the four understandings is the characteristic of knowledge: it itself is the connection. With what is it connected? With the fact that it constitutes the cause of realising supreme enlightenment. But how does one recognise the principle of the four understandings? By understanding all phenomena entirely conditioned by the emotions and those that are totally purified by means of the nature of the letters (one recognises that) from the very beginning they are the state of Body, Voice and Mind. By means of understanding the single cause (one recognises that) by their nature they are the ultimate dimension of enlightenment. By means of understanding through empowerment and by direct understanding (one recognises) that (they can be) empowered: this is the characteristic of knowledge.
The necessity instead constitutes the characteristic of applicaton. But why is (application) necessary? Because it represents the primary and secondary causes for the realisation of supreme enlightenment.
The supreme necessity constitutes the characteristic of the fruit. What does this mean? All phenomena that are self-perfected from the beginning in the state of absolute equality, without having to be accepted or rejected, constitute the characteristic of the fruit. Why so? Because from the beginning the wheel of transmigration itself is the nature of enlightenment, self-perfected in the characteristics of nirvana. Actually realising the chakra of the inexhaustible ornaments of Body, Voice and Mind is the supreme necessity.
One might object: "Talking of primary and secondary causes and of a fruit concurs with the teachings of the lower vehicles. If

Total Perfection is original enlightenment, does talking in terms of primary and secondary causes and of a fruit not contradict this?" (I answer): In reality Mahayoga and the other lower vehicles maintain that the fundamental path for realising the fruit comprises [the primary and secondary causes of] the four approaches and attainments[232]. But in Dzogpa Chenpo this is not necessary and the four approaches and attainments too, being perfected effortlessly in the yoga of self-perfection, are not considered something concrete tied to primary and secondary causes and a fruit. This can be understood through the upadeshas that take one directly beyond [into the state of self-perfection]. ⌘

2.8.9.4. The four branches of approach and attainment

Regarding the true meaning of the four branches of approach and attainment, it says (op. 21, A: p. 170, 6; B: p. 24, 2):

⌘ Thus one should engage diligently in the yoga that leads to spontaneous perfection of the final goal of approach, complete approach, attainment and great attainment[233]. ⌘

And in particular, regarding the true meaning of approach (op. 21, A: p. 171, 1; B: p. 24, 2):

⌘ Approach is the recognition of bodhichitta, the understanding that all phenomena are from the beginning the nature of enlight-

[232] The four branches of approach and attainment (*bsnyen sgrub yan lag bzhi*) may include diverse aspects of tantric practice according to the specific context. At the common level these concern the various phases of the *sādhana* of a *yi dam*, starting from transformation of oneself into the deity together with the recitation of the *mantra* until complete realisation.

[233] In this case, according to Rong zom pa's commentary (op. 31: p. 254, 6) the approach (*bsnyen pa*) constitutes the object to recognise, the complete approach (*nyen ba'i bsnyen pa*) and the attainment (*sgrub pa*) constitute the method, the great attainment (*sgrub pa chen po*) is the result.

enment, for which reason there is nothing to obtain through practice or to correct by means of antidotes. ⌘

And regarding the true meaning of complete approach (op. 21, A: p. 171, 2; B: p. 24, 3):

⌘ Complete approach is the recognition of oneself as the deity: the understanding that, since all phenomena are from the beginning the nature of enlightenment, we too are from the beginning the nature of the deity that is not something to realise now by means of practice. ⌘

And regarding the true meaning of attainment (op. 21, A: p. 171, 3; B: p. 24, 3):

⌘ Attainment is the creation of the mother: the understanding that from the dimension of space, which is the great mother, space itself manifests in the four great mothers (of the elements) earth, water, fire and air, and that from the beginning these are the mothers endowed with the active function (of existence). ⌘

And, finally, regarding the true meaning of great attainment (op. 21, A: p. 171, 5; B: p. 24, 5):

⌘ Great attainment is the union of method and prajña. From the prajña of the five mothers and from the emptiness of space that is the mother (there manifest) as consorts the Buddhas of the five aggregates (that represent) method, from the beginning in union without any intention. From their union (comes) bodhichitta whose nature (has the capacity to) emanate in the deities, male and female (literally: brothers and sisters), whose meaning is primordial enlightenment. In illusory enjoyment of a dimension that too is illusory one (experiences) the illusory flow of supreme bliss: in the very moment of bliss without conceptualisation one realises the true meaning of the absence of characteristics equal to space, thus acceding to the state of self-perfec-

tion. In this way the four demons[234] too are vanquished and the final goal is achieved. ⌘

Rongzompa's commentary explains (op. 31: p. 259, 6):

⌘ Here it explains concisely how the four approaches and attainments of Mahayoga are transcended in Dzogpa Chenpo [for example by affirming that the approach is the recognition of bodhichitta and not something that depends on the temporary factor of the way]. Great attainment is the union of method and prajña and refers to their union also in relation to bodhichitta: thus it demonstrates the original union and the state of self-perfection of the three aspects consisting in method, prajña and bodhichitta; father, mother and male and female emanations; the three doors of liberation that are emptiness, the absence of intention and the absence of characteristics[235]. ⌘

Furthermore, the commentary by Ju Mipham called *Treasury of Jewels (Nor bu'i bang mdzod)* states (op. 16: p. 451, 3):

⌘ Approach means recognising bodhichitta as the inseparable union of the base of original purity and of self-perfection, that is understanding that all phenomena, already pure in themselves, are from the very beginning the nature of enlightenment and that there is nothing new that must be obtained by means of the way or corrected by means of antidotes.

[234] The four demons (*bdud bzhi*) that cause interruptions or hindrances to liberation are: the demon of the son of the deity or of pride (*lha'i bu'i bdud*); the demon of the aggregates of the body (*phung po'i bdud*); the demon of the lord of death (*'chi bdag gi bdud*); the demon of passions or disturbing emotions (*nyon mongs pa'i bdud*). (O.N.)

[235] The three doors of liberation (*rnam thar sgo gsum*), in Tibetan *stong pa nyid, smon pa med pa* and *mtshan ma med pa*, also called 'the contemplations of the three doors of liberation' (*rnam thar sgo gsum gyi ting 'dzin*) are characteristic features of the *sūtra* teachings.

Complete approach means recognising, on the basis of this same view, that the individual composed of five aggregates is the deity itself, that is understanding that, as all phenomena are from the beginning the nature of enlightenment we too are from the beginning the nature of the deity that is thus not something to realise by generating oneself as the deity on the basis of the view of Mahayoga and of the other (vehicles). (When it is said that) attainment is the creation of the mother, this is not the same as the creation of the mother as applied in Mahayoga and the other (vehicles). Rather it means understanding that, from the dimension of space that is the great mother, space itself manifests as the four great mothers earth, water, fire and air, and that these mothers, endowed with the active functions of giving space, of supporting, of concentrating (in one place), of ripening and of moving, respectively, have existed from the very beginning.
Great attainment is the union of method and prajña. But in which way are they united? From the prajña of the absence of self-nature of the five great elements that are the mothers and from the (door of) liberation of emptiness, that is the space of the mother, the Buddhas of the five aggregates, that represent the method, manifest without interruption as consorts. They are in union from the beginning (on the basis of the principle of the door) of liberation and of the absence of intention, which is absolutely not the result of (engaging on) a path. From their nature of inseparability in (the state of) bodhichitta all the sense bases manifest as male and female Bodhisattvas whose nature, that is the very condition of original enlightenment, does not depend on the emanation of male and female Bodhisattvas from the bodhichitta of the union between the male and female deity as occurs in Mahayoga and the other (vehicles). The wisdom of rigpa illusorily enjoys the ultimate dimension of phenomena, similar to a magical display, that is the consort. When experiencing the harmonious[236] state of the wisdom of bliss that manifests everywhere, without interruption and inseparable, beyond concepts

[236] In Tibetan *rol mo lta bu*, literally 'similar to music'

and all attachments, not even a speck of dualistic attachment remains so the pleasure of wisdom is supreme bliss. Experiencing and enjoying its illusory flow (one understands) that this itself is the flow of the true condition that, like space, cannot be grasped even in the moment. The moment of bliss transcends all conceptual elaboration, (is based on the door of) liberation of the absence of characteristics, cannot be conceptualised within any limits and is like space. Never leaving this dimension of total equanimity means to have realised the single state of self-arising wisdom of the ultimate nature: thus, without acting and without effort one is in the state of self-perfection. In fact, the impure causes of the dualism of subject and object, being purified in self-arising wisdom, manifest without interruption as the flow of the fundamental nature: this is the accumulation of merit. The fact that there is not the slightest concept or attachment to conceptual characteristics represents the accumulation of wisdom. This total self-arising wisdom in which the two accumulations are self-perfected also vanquishes the four demons and enables realisation of the final goal. ⌘

Regarding the way the four demons are vanquished, in his commentary Rongzompa says (op. 31: p. 260, 3):

⌘ In general every teaching has a specific method for subjugating the demons. Here it asserts that through the four branches of approaches and attainments one can vanquish the four demons. In fact, by means of contemplation of the unborn[237] - the characteristic of recognising bodhichitta that constitutes the approach - the demon of the lord of death is vanquished. By means of contemplation similar to a magical illusion[238] - the characteristic of recognising oneself as the deity - the demon of aggregates is vanquished. By means of contemplation that transcends the sub-

[237] In Tibetan *ma skyes pa'i ting nge 'dzin.*

[238] In Tibetan *sgyu ma lta bu'i ting nge 'dzin*, at times synonymous with *kun tu snang ba'i ting nge 'dzin*, the contemplation of total vision according to Mahāyoga.

tlest atom[239] - characteristic of the creation of the mother that constitutes attainment - the demon of the passions is vanquished. By means of non-conceptual space-like contemplation[240] - characteristic of the union of method and prajña that constitutes the great attainment - the demon of the son of the deity (that symbolises) interruptions and distractions is vanquished. A path that has the power to vanquish the four demons is a perfect path, and in particular this is the great path (that enables realisation) of self-perfection without relying on effort. ⌘

All of these passages clearly explain the way to enter Total Perfection.

2.8.10. Atiyoga as the final goal of the three inner tantras

In the *Garland of Views*, in order to show clearly that the final goal of the instructions on the two stages of kyedrim and dzogrim of the inner tantras mast be integrated in Dzogpa Chenpo and that the final meaning of tantras such as the *Guhyagarbha*, the root tantra of Mahayoga, the *Guhyasamaja* etc. is not something different from Dzogpa Chenpo, the great teacher Padmasambhava, 'all-knowing in the three times', has clearly and comprehensively explained the authentic principle of Dzogpa Chenpo on the basis of quotations from the *Guhyagarbha* and *Guhyasamaja*. This is the reason why we find quotations taken from these Mahayoga tantras, and one should not at all think that these tantras have been quoted to demonstrate that the principle of 'self-liberation' of Atiyoga belongs to tantric cycles such as *Magical Manifestation*[241]. This can be established with certainty by studying the root tantras and lungs of Atiyoga.

[239] In Tibetan *rdul dang bral ba'i ting nge 'dzin*: beyond any concept of an infinitesimal particle as the essential constituent of phenomena.

[240] In Tibetan *mi dmigs mkha' dang snyoms pa'i ting nge 'dzin.*

[241] *Magical Manifestation* (*sgyu 'phrul*) is the name of a fundamental series of Mahāyoga teachings containing eight *tantras*, the foremost being the *Guhyagarbha.*

2.8.11. The state of Ati beyond errors and obstacles

In fact, according to *Bodhichitta: The All-creating King (Kun byed rgyal po)*[242], a tantra of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo originally taught by the teacher Zhönnu Rolpa Nampar Tsewa in the primordial epoch when the average human life span was eighty thousand years, subsequently transmitted and clarified by the teacher Garab Dorje and consequently again made available to us on earth (op. 1: p. 147, 3):

ཞེས Those who adhere to Mahayoga aspire to (the realization) of Vajradhara:
Having entered the path of method and prajña
They practise the four (branches) of approach and attainment
In the mandala of purity of one's own condition.
The total bliss of Atiyoga
Is bodhichitta that transcends all effort:
(The state) beyond striving is hindered by Mahayoga.
Applying effort to Total Perfection
Means falling into the error of Mahayoga.

Those who adhere to Anuyoga aspire to the level of 'Indivisible' realisation:
Having entered the path of the ultimate dimension and wisdom
They consider the pure dimension of emptiness to be the cause
Of all the phenomena which appear in existence
And the mandala of wisdom to be the effect.
The great bliss of Atiyoga
Is bodhichitta that transcends cause and effect:
(The state) beyond cause and effect is hindered by Anuyoga.
Considering Total Perfection in terms of cause and effect
Means falling into the error of Anuyoga.

[242] *Kun byed rgyal po* is the principal *tantra* of the Sems sde series of rDzogs chen. See Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Adriano Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, Ithaca 1999 (English translation by A. Lukianowicz).

These, then, are the errors and obstacles concerning view and behaviour.

Listen Mahasattva!
The view and behaviour of Total Perfection
Are not similar to those of practices based on cause and effect:
The view and behaviour of bodhichitta
Are similar in nature to space:
Space is beyond thought and analysis.
Those who seek to reason and analyse
Do not realize the space of bodhichitta;
The dualism of thoughts and analysis is the error and the obstacle.
Since the view and the behaviour are of the nature of space,
Those who distinguish between subject and object
Do not realise the space of bodhichitta;
The dualism of subject and object is the error and the obstacle. ꙮ

There are many explanations similar to these to be found in the Dzogchen scriptures.

2.8.12. The essence of Dzogchen in the oral transmission of Shang Shung

In the epoch when the average human life span had become one hundred years, in the country of Shang Shung the great Bön teacher Shenrab Miwoche (and other great teachers like) Lhabön Yongsu Tagpa orally transmitted a Dzogchen teaching later known as *The Oral Transmission of Dzogchen of Shang Shung*[243]. The original verses of its nyengyüd[244] are contained in the *Twelve Small Tantras* (*rGyud bu chung bcu gnyis*, op. 6: p. 171, 5):

[243] The traditional lineage of the *rDzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan brgyud* up to Yongs su dag pa is as follows: Kun tu bzang po, gShen lha 'od dkar, rGyal ba gShen rab, Tshad med 'od ldan, 'Phrul gshen snang ldan, Bar snang khu byug, bZang bza' ring btsun, 'Chi med gtsug phud, gSang ba 'dus pa, Yong su dag pa.

[244] In the present case *snyan rgyud*, literally 'oral transmission', signifies an aphorism encapsulating in a few words the content of vast and profound teachings.

Regarding the condition of the base, it says:

⌘ One's original state of rigpa is the base of everything. ⌘

Regarding the nature of the path, it says (op. 6: p. 171, 5):

⌘ The path is self-perfected beyond effort and progress. ⌘

Regarding the nature of the fruit, it says (op.6: p.171, 5):

⌘ The fruit is self-perfected in its own condition. ⌘

Thus is explained the nature of base, path and fruit.
Regarding the nature of the view, it says (op. 6: p. 171, 5):

⌘ In terms of the real meaning there is no view to uphold. ⌘

Regarding the nature of meditation (op. 6: p. 172, 1):

⌘ In terms of the real meaning there is nothing to meditate. ⌘

Regarding the nature of the behaviour, it says (op. 6; p. 172, 1):

⌘ In terms of the real meaning there is no conduct to adopt. ⌘

Thus is explained the nature of view, meditation and behaviour.
Regarding the nature of the example, it says (op. 6: p. 172, 1):

⌘ The example of mind is space. ⌘

Regarding the nature of the characteristic sign, it says (op. 6: p. 172, 1):

⌘ The characteristic sign of mind is the nature of mind. ⌘

Regarding the nature of the meaning, it says (op. 6: p. 172, 1):

⌘ The meaning of mind is the ultimate nature of phenomena. ⌘

This is the explanation of the nature of the example, of the characteristic sign and of the meaning[245]

Regarding the nature of the unborn, of the uninterrupted and of the non-duality between birth and cessation, the text says (op. 6: p. 172, 1):

⌘ In the ultimate unborn dimension
Abides wisdom without interruption,
The single sphere beyond the duality of birth and cessation[246]. ⌘

These basic verses, which explain the fundamental principle of Dzogpa Chenpo by means of the twelve 'natures' mentioned, are known as the *Twelve Small Tantras of the Single Sphere of Bodhichitta*[247] They were put in writing and explicated by the great teacher Cherchen Nangzher Lödpo[248] and consequently today we have both the root tantra and the various commentaries by Cherchen himself. These texts too clearly evince the fundamental principle of Total Perfection.

[245] In Tibetan *dpe don rtags*. The characteristic sign in this case refers to the practitioner's experience.

[246] In Tibetan the twelve verses read: *rang rig gnyug ma kun gyi gzhi / rtsol bral bgrod med lhun grub lam / ci bzhin lhun grub 'bras bu ste / yang dag don la lta ru med / yang dag don la bsgom du med / yang dag don la spyod du med / sems kyi dpe ni nam mkha' 'dra / sems kyi rtags ni sems nyid yin / sems kyi don ni bon nyid do / skye ba med pa'i bon dbyings na / 'gag pa med pa'i ye shes gnas / skye 'gag gnyis med thig le gcig.*

[247] In Tibetan *Byang sems thig le nyag gcig gi rgyud bu chung bcu gnyis.*

[248] Gyer chen snang bzhed lhod po (VII-VIII centuries) received the teachings of the *Zhang zhung snyan brgyud* from a *nirmāṇakāya* manifestation of the 'rainbow body' (*'ja' lus*) of Tapihritsa, a teacher who had lived some centuries earlier.

Shenrab Miwo

CHAPTER SIX

THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

1. THE WAY TO PRACTISE THE ESSENCE OF THE PATH OF HINAYANA

Whether or not one has received the Refuge vow or any specific vow, practitioners of Dzogchen must seek by means of presence and awareness to apply the various aspects of the Refuge explained above as much as possible in all circumstances. In particular, on the basis of the words of Bhagavan Shakyamuni:

ཁྱོད་ Whoever harms others is not a practitioner, ཁྱོད་

it is important to engage with zeal in order to be able to maintain in a natural way pure morality based on the principle of not harming others. In fact, all the main aspects of Hinayana practice can be subsumed in this mental attitude or behaviour based on presence and awareness.

2. THE WAY TO PRACTISE THE ESSENCE OF THE PATH OF MAHAYANA

Practitioners must always try to apply as much as possible the various trainings explained regarding the way to generate Bodhichitta. In particular, through constant presence and awareness it is necessary at all times and in all circumstances to observe oneself attentively in order to recognise whatever intention, good or bad, arises in the mind, and as soon as one discerns a bad intention it must be transformed into a good one. If in this way one succeeds in applying the essence of the practice, at a certain point the flow of bad actions engendered by intentions will stop automatically while virtuous thoughts, attitudes and actions will increase. So, by means of pure intention and fearless courage

one must engage with diligence in all circumstances so as to be able genuinely to act for the good of others. All the main aspects of the practice of the way of the Bodhisattva can be subsumed in this excellent attitude based on presence and awareness.

3. THE WAY TO PRACTISE THE ESSENCE OF THE THREE OUTER TANTRAS

An example of a simple way to apply the essence of the practice of meditation and of the recitation of mantras according to the three series of outer tantras can be found in the practice of Arya Tara[249] as it is done in the Dzogchen Community.

After having completed the necessary phases of purification[250] we visualise Arya Tara in front of us in space, then invite the wisdom deity to dissolve into the visualised deity. Then we recite the invocations of Tara. If we feel like doing something more elaborate, we can recite the praise and make offerings. At the end of all this, reciting the root mantra we communicate with great ardour in order to activate (Tara's) wisdom: this condenses all the main aspects in their entirety of Kriya Tantra practice.

After having visualised and recited the mantra as described above, Tara dissolves into light and is reabsorbed within us: hence all negative actions, emotions and obstacles accumulated through body, voice and mind are completely purified and our body, voice and mind are empowered in the nature of the three Vajras: this condenses in their entirety all the fundamental aspects of Charya or Ubhaya Tantra practice.

Visualising the letter TAM in our heart and manifesting in the form of Tara we recite the root mantra, and through one of the methods of radiation and reabsorption we benefit ourselves and others: this condenses in their entirety all the fundamental aspects of Yoga Tantra practice.

[249] For example, the practice of Tārā (*sgrol ma'i rnal 'byor*) described in *'Phags ma sgrol ma'i zab thig*, a *gter ma* of mChog gyur gling pa (1829-1870). (O.N.)

[250] In Tibetan *khrus dang gtsang sbra*: this means that the place of practice and the practitioner too etc. must be clean. (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu)

Those who have entered the path of Dzogchen should also seek, in accord with the circumstances of time and place, to practise correctly the yogas of Shri Vajrasattva, of Arya Avalokiteshvara etc. on the basis of the same pattern used in the Tara practice, without falling into sectarianism or the limitations of a school. As this method contains all the main points of practice of the three series of outer tantras, when all conditions are favourable practitioners should engage in applying it: this is the attitude and behaviour of the ideal practitioner.

4. THE WAY TO PRACTISE THE ESSENCE OF MAHAYOGA

If there are all the necessary circumstances to practise Mahayoga then we should engage in the stages of kyedrim and dzogrim on the basis of the original texts of the *Guhyagarbha* tantra and in conclusion integrate the final accomplishment of these two stages in the state of rigpa of Total Perfection. In fact, as explained by Padmasambhava, the goal of the view of Mahayoga is Dzogchen. Consequently it is clear that the essence of the practice of Mahayoga, too, should never deviate from this profound view.

4.1. Guruyoga that unifies the essence of Mahayoga

For those without the opportunity to engage in the practice of the two characteristic Mahayoga stages of kyedrim and dzogrim, a supreme method that enables the practitioner to discover nakedly the authentic condition of the primordial state, the essential nature of the self-arising Vajra that is the ultimate essence of all the profound methods, consists in the various experiences of pleasure, clarity and absence of thought that we can encounter. And since any special upadesha that deals with this must of necessity be connected with the teacher's empowering flow and compassionate energy, we must engage in the practice of Guruyoga, recognising the teacher as the 'wish-fulfilling jewel that unifies all'[251]

[251] See Chapter Three: 4.

4.1.1. The visualisation

In the sky space before us we visualise a luminous five-coloured sphere inside which is Maha Guru Padmasambhava in the form of Nangsid Zilnön (Universal Conqueror), union of the Three Jewels, of the Three Roots and of all the Tathagatas.

OM

Reciting the sound OM we visualise that the three secret states of the Body, Voice and Mind of all Enlightened Beings and all Vidyadharas unify in the wish-fulfilling jewel teacher.

OM AH HUM

Sounding OM AH HUM we imagine that the empowering flow of the three secret states of the Three Jewels, of the Three Roots and of the Tathagatas of the three times and of all the Atiyoga Vidyadharas present and active in the universe manifests brightly in the form of the white OM, of the red AH and of the blue HUM respectively in the three seats of the wish-fulfilling jewel teacher.

VAJRA GURU

Pronouncing VAJRA GURU the three secret states of all the teachers who have transmitted knowledge of the real condition of the Vajra, whether in a direct or an indirect manner, are invited in the form of lights of the three colours: white, red, and blue. They dissolve, unifying in the three syllables at the three seats of the wish-fulfilling jewel teacher.

PADMA THÖTHRENGTSAL

Pronouncing PADMA THÖTHRENGTSAL we communicate through the secret name of Guru Padmasambhava in order to activate the wisdom of the wish-fulfilling jewel teacher, who unifies all the

⌘ Concerning the asceticism of the Shravakas, it is written in the *Vinaya ('Dul ba)*:

Do not commit negative actions,
Practise virtue perfectly,
Tame your mind completely:
This is Buddha's teaching.

Thus according to the (Shravakas') view all virtuous and non-virtuous dharmas exist distinctly both relatively and absolutely, (consequently) they engage in asceticism and resolute conduct in practising virtue and rejecting negative deeds. ⌘

Rongzompa's commentary explains (op. 31: p. 267, 6):

⌘ (Buddhists' asceticism) is illustrated by means of a quotation from Buddha that epitomises the meaning of the three trainings. *Do not commit negative actions* pertains to training in morality, that is to all the aspects of morality aimed at refraining from trespasses of body and voice that cause rebirth in the lower states, such as killing, stealing, improper sexual conduct and lying, that are the gravest among the ten non-virtuous actions, and other reprehensible actions.
Practise virtue perfectly pertains to training in prajña, that is to all the teachings subsumed in the prajña of the precise understanding of the Four Noble Truths that enable entry onto the noble path and attainment of the fruit.
Tame your mind completely pertains to higher training of the mind (contemplation): ordinary people, in fact, are naturally attracted to the five objects of enjoyment whence they always rely on the field of experience that constitutes the cause of all the passions. Higher practitioners instead, mastering their mind through the power of meditative stability, of samadhi and of the states of absorption in equanimity, cultivate contemplation that removes them from the sphere of experience of impure vision and enables them to enter the sphere of experience of total purity. ⌘

And, regarding the meaning of the phrase *all virtuous and non-virtuous dharmas exist distinctly both relatively and absolutely* (op. 31: p. 269, 4):

⌘ 'Exist' is an assertion based on logic, hence existence is discussed (in terms) of both the relative and absolute. In fact all the phenomena that appear to the relative consciousness also appear to the absolute consciousness. Thus they are said to 'exist in both' The fact that the word 'truth' is not added means that such an assertion is the result of hampered (knowledge). In fact (the absolute and the relative) cannot both be truth. If the relative is deemed true the absolute cannot be deemed true and vice versa. Thus the intention here is to demonstrate existence and not truth, consequently it is said that (virtues and non-virtues) exist distinctly both in the relative and in the absolute. ⌘

3.2. The asceticism of the Bodhisattvas

The Garland of Views (op. 21, A: p. 174, 5; B: p. 26, 4) says:

⌘ Regarding the asceticism of the Bodhisattvas, *The Vows of the Bodhisattvas (Byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa)* states:

Not committing (destructive) deeds motivated by circumstances,
Not using miraculous powers or threats etc.
Having love and compassion
And virtuous intention, there is no stain.

This (means that) if you are rooted in total compassion whatever action you undertake, whether virtuous or non-virtuous, your vow will not be stained because in the last analysis the Bodhisattva vow is based on the behaviour of total compassion. ⌘

Rongzompa's commentary explains (op. 31: p. 270, 3):

⌘ Cultivating the intention to obtain the wisdom of omniscience to release all beings from the ocean of samsara is the fundamental point of the (Bodhisattva) vow. In fact, until one attains the wisdom of omniscience, helping others is not really possible. In order to attain it Bodhichitta, whose essence is compassion, is necessary as the first cause; total compassion as the root; and skill in methods for the final perfection: these three elements must not be lacking. Their opposites, the negative deeds that by their very nature cause transgression of the Bodhisattva (vow), are of four kinds: the opposite of keeping Bodhichitta whole is losing Bodhichitta; the opposite of total compassion that constitutes its root is not protecting beings due to avarice and harming them due to malice; the opposite of skill in methods for the final perfection is completely abandoning the sacred Dharma. Thus if one does not commit these four transgressions that consist in abandoning the sacred Dharma, losing Bodhichitta, being avaricious and harming others, and if one is always rooted in compassion, then whenever (circumstances require) the destruction of beings through one's body and voice then one must do this. In fact *not committing destructive deeds motivated by circumstances*[285] means that Bodhisattvas breaks their vow if they are aware of being able to emancipate someone by destroying (a life) but do not do it.

In the same way, *not using miraculous powers or threats etc.* means that, even though deceiving, deriding, threatening etc., exhibiting miraculous powers are not sacred actions, if they can emancipate (someone) but are not utilised this transgresses (the vow). (In the text) this is (affirmatively) implied in the (two) phrases stated in the negative.

Having love and compassion and virtuous intention, there is no stain instead is meant literally: if one's thought is based on love and compassion, and thus one's intention is virtuous, then even performing fierce actions does not cause a defect in one's vow. ⌘

[285] The original text reads *rkyen du 'tshams par don mi byed* while Rong zom pa's commentary has *rkyen du 'tshams par tshar mi gcod.*

The Garland of Views (op. 21, A: p.175, 2; B: p. 26, 6) says:

⌘ Regarding supreme asceticism, *The Sutra of the Great Promise (Dam tshig chen po'i mdo)* says:

When one is certain in Buddha's vehicle
Then even enjoying the five passions and five sense objects
One's morality remains intact
Like a lotus (that grows) in mud.

In fact, as from the beginning all phenomena are in a condition of equality there is no compassion to cultivate or hatred to abandon. However this does not mean not feeling compassionate towards those who do not have this understanding. On the basis of the view of understanding of total purity, one applies asceticism and resolute conduct in a pure manner[286]. ⌘

Rongzompa's commentary explains (op. 31: p. 272, 4):

⌘ *When one is certain in Buddha's vehicle* refers to having a mind utterly apprised of the deep meaning of method and prajña and to having a mode of thought apprised of the condition of equality.
Then even enjoying the five passions and five sense objects one's morality remains intact like a lotus (that grows) in mud means that even if an action is carried out it is not accumulated (as a

[286] The Tibetan *ji ltar lta bas ye nas rnam par dag par rtogs pa bzhin du dka' thub dang brtul zhugs kyang de ltar rnam par dag par spyod* is based on the edition published together with Rong zom pa's commentary in *Selected Writings of Rong Zom Chos-kyi Bzang-po*, Leh 1974, pp. 1-18. Most editions have *ji ltar lta bas ye nas rnam par rtog pa dang mi rtog pa bzhin du dka' thub dang brtul zhugs kyang de ltar rnam par dag pa dang ma dag pa spyod do*, which means "according to whether from the beginning one's view is conditioned by or free of concepts there ensue pure and impure asceticism and resolute conduct, respectively."

negative karma). In fact, according to *The Vows of Individual Liberation (So sor thar pa'i mdo)*:

An action carried out with the intention to benefit others
From grievous can become less grievous[287]

And *The Bodhisattvas' Sutra (Byang chub sems dpa'i mdo)* says:

Grievous actions committed on the basis of a compassionate intention not only do not entail transgression (of the vow) but (instead) perfectly maintain the vow.

In this case this means that, if your mind is rooted in the state of equality, any action you carry out is not stained by faults and furthermore you perfectly maintain the Shravaka morality and all the Bodhisattva trainings. Thus if your mind is ruled by (understanding of) the equality of all phenomena no conflict can arise.
In conclusion, the Shravaka vow consists in avoiding actions that can harm others.
The Bodhisattva vow consists not only in avoiding harming others but also in actually acting to help them.
As well as avoiding harming others and actually acting to help them, the Secret Mantra vow consists in practising the Tathagata's activities.
Furthermore, the most important things in the Shravaka vow are the basic proposition and the concrete activity (relative to karma). Bodhisattvas ascribe greater importance to compassion. In Secret Mantra greater importance is attributed to prajña. Furthermore, Shravakas emulate the noble Arhats of the past. Bodhisattvas emulate the Bodhisattvas of the higher levels of realisation. In Secret Mantra one directly emulates the Tathagatas.
Many other things could be said in this regard, but let us return to our text. For those applying the samaya of great equality of

[287] I.e., a grievous transgression (*pham pa*) becomes less grievous (*sbam po*).

Secret Mantra nothing impure exists. Thus it is said that *on the basis of the view of understanding of total purity, one applies asceticism and resolute conduct in a pure manner.* In fact this passage summarises the samaya of total equality of Secret Mantra. From this we can infer, even though it is not stated explicitly, that ineluctably ascetic practices and resolute conduct based on impure views are applied in an impure manner. ꕥ

We have thus read a description of the various methods of engaging in ascetic practices and resolute conduct in the diverse traditions. Nevertheless the term 'supreme asceticism' found in reference to the supreme vehicle is used only in order to understand that engaging in the state of total equality and purity represents or replaces all the kinds of ascetic conduct of the other vehicles. In reality, the behaviour of Samantabhadra of Ati Dzogchen, that is the condition of total equality, completely transcends the effort (entailed) in any ascetic practice.

4. THE NEED TO INTEGRATE ALL MODES OF CONDUCT IN THE BEHAVIOUR OF SAMANTABHADRA

There are differences in the ways of engaging in behaviour according to the nature and fundamental characteristics of the path on which it is based:

- Conduct in conformity with the sutras, thus based on the path of renunciation, of the Hinayana or Mahayana traditions, including the various modes of behaviour related to the gradual or direct methods[288].
- Conduct in conformity with the outer and inner tantras, thus based on the principles of purification and of transformation.
- The behaviour of Samantabhadra of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, based on the swift path of self-liberation.

[288] The two great streams of the Mahāyāna tradition are: the gradual (*rim gyis pa*) stream, which attributes great importance to study and the preliminary practices, such as was upheld in Tibet by Kamalaśila; and the direct (*cig char ba*) stream, such as Chinese Ch'an and Japanese Zen, in which the practitioner directly accesses the absolute state by means of non-conceptual meditation.

However, those who follow the Dzogchen teaching on the basis of clear understanding of the fundamental characteristics of the kinds of conduct applied in the diverse paths should engage until they are able to integrate or unify their essential points in the dimension of the behaviour of Samantabhadra of Ati. This is in perfect accord with the authentic principle of the Dzogchen teaching.

5. THE BEHAVIOUR OF SAMANTABHADRA OF ATI

What is the behaviour of Samantabhadra of Ati? *The All-creating King* root tantra says (op. 1: p. 236, 6):

ཨ Listen! I will explain to you the behaviour of the All-creating King:
All virtues and negativities, accepting and rejecting, pure and impure, large and small
Are one single thing in unborn bodhichitta:
So understand that there is nothing to accept or reject!
Understand (the state) beyond pure and impure!
Understand that there is no difference between acting and not acting!
Understand that which cannot be subdivided in centre and boundary!
Understand that the root is unborn bodhichitta!

Listen, I will explain to you the behaviour of the All-creating King:
Whatever action you do, no conflicts arise,
Because both acting and not acting are unborn:
Recognising this, whatever action you do remains the unborn.

Listen! The behaviour of the All-creating King, that is me,
Being similar to space cannot be limited or measured,
Being non-dual, it transcends the limits of being and non-being:
Understand that this is the behaviour of all-creating bodhichitta!

Understand that the five objects of enjoyment[289] too are the behaviour of bodhichitta!
Understand that the five (emotions such as) attachment and anger[290] are the behaviour of bodhichitta!
Understand that the five ornamental causes[291] are the behaviour of bodhichitta!
Understand that the three worlds and the three spheres of existence[292] are the behaviour of bodhichitta!
Behaviour which ignores the unborn
Has never been taught by me, forebear of all the Enlightened Ones. ⌘

[289] The five objects of enjoyment (*'dod pa lnga*) are: form, that can be beautiful or ugly; sound, that can be pleasant or unpleasant; smell, that can be agreeable or disagreeable; taste, that can be good or bad; touch, that can be soft or rough. They are the object of attachment or, conversely, of aversion. (O.N.)

[290] The five passions or disturbing emotions (in the text: *chags sdang lnga*) are: attachment, anger, ignorance, pride, jealousy. (O.N.)

[291] The five ornamental causes (*rgyan gyi rgyu lnga*) are the five elements: earth, water, fire, air, space. (O.N.)

[292] The three realms (*khams gsum*) are: the formless realm, the form realm and the passion realm. The three spheres of existence (*srid gsum*) are: the dimension of the Devas above, the dimension of the gNyan in intermediate space, the dimension of the Nāgas below. At times the term *srid gsum* can also be used as a synonym of *'jig rten gsum* or *khams gsum*. (O.N.)

6. CHÖD: THE METHOD PERFECTLY CONNECTED WITH THE CONDUCTS IN THE SUTRAS AND TANTRAS

An extraordinary method closely linked to the principle of behaviour of all the sutra and tantra teachings transmitted by the perfect Bhagavan Buddha is the Chöd or Cutting of Demons, an authentic teaching with all the true qualities which is the fruit of the experience of the lady teacher Machig Labkyi Drönma (1031-1129).

The Chöd is an extraordinary teaching that embraces and unifies the essence of the sutra teachings of the Prajñaparamita, of the Mahamudra upadeshas of Secret Mantra and of the fundamental principle of the supreme Dzogchen teaching. However, the way to practise Chöd and the name itself of this profound practice certainly originated from the lady teacher Machig Labkyi Drönma. In fact, the teachings on Chöd by the Acharya Aryadeva, the Secret Chöd of Naropa[293], the various termas related to Chöd attributed to Padmasambhava and his disciples and the Chöd termas of the Bon tradition[294] were all called by this name in later times because they contain the principle of Chöd, but there is no proof that the name Chöd was in use in ancient times.

Many great Ati teachers of the past, and in particular the teacher of my two root teachers Changchub Dorje (1826-1961) and Ayu Khandro (1838-1953), the Vidyadhara Nyagla Padma Dündul (1816-1872) and his disciples, the Siddha Ogyen Tendzin (1893-1959) who realised the rainbow body etc., adopted Chöd as the fundamental point of the aspect of behaviour of Dzogpa Chenpo. Thus it is really important for practitioners of Santi Maha Sangha too to integrate this practice perfectly in the base of the teaching.

[293] In Tibetan *Aryadeva'i gcod kyi gdams pa* and *Na ro gsang gcod.* Many instructions on gCod are found in volume JA of the *gDams ngag mdzod.*

[294] The most famous gCod of the Bon tradition is the *mKha' 'gro gsang gcod,* a *gter ma* rediscovered in the XIV century.

The Great Collection (bKa' tshoms chen mo) attributed to Machig Labdrönma herself states (op. 4: p. 456, 5):

⌘ The root of demons is our mind:
When we perceive something as an external object
And feel desire and attachment we are captured by demons,
Contaminated by the mind that grasps objects.
There are four types of demons:
The demon that blocks [based on external objects],
The demon that does not block [based on mental judgment within][295],
The demon of complacency [based on the manifestation of our own qualities],
The demon of ego [based on dualistic thought].
All of these can be subsumed in the demon of ego. ⌘

Here we have read a general description of the four demons that have to be cut, and how the root of all of them is ego.

6.1.1. The demon that blocks

From *The Great Collection* (op. 4: p. 456, 6):

⌘ There are many demons that block:
When an object appears before our senses
And we judge it, rejecting or accepting, the demon that blocks (arises)
And due to our consideration of (the object's) concreteness we bind ourselves to samsara.
Yet form by its very nature is empty:
Do not get attached to form, meditate (recognising it as) emptiness!

[295] The terms *thogs bcas kyi bdud* and *thogs med kyi bdud* are often translated 'tangible demons' and 'intangible demons'; the term *thogs* in any case signifies a material obstacle that blocks or hinders.

Feeling no attachment to form
You liberate yourself from the demon of believing in something permanent.
Without making emptiness (an object of) meditation for the mind,
You surely liberate yourself from the demon of (believing in) nothingness[296].
The manifestation of form cannot be blocked:
(If) we do not consider it something concrete, it is only the light of our vision;
(This applies to) sounds, smells, tastes, (objects of) touch
And of the mind, etc., which self-liberate in the same way.
The mind is the demon that does not block (concretely),
That which manifests through the senses
Is the demon that blocks.
Everything that appears before the sense organs
Cut it directly by the state of self-liberation!
Transform it indissolubly into Great Ignorance![297] ཨཱཿ

This is the explanation of the demon that blocks, linked to sense perception, together with the instructions on the general way to cut it and on the specific way to engage in cutting based on the principle of self-liberation of Ati.

6.1.2. The demon that does not block

From *The Great Collection* (op. 4: p. 457, 2):

ཨཱཿ How does the demon that does not block arise?
Discriminating thoughts that judge
In terms of good and bad what appears before our mind
Are the demon that does not block (concretely).
Beyond our self-arising mind
(There does not exist) something good to consider as a deity

[296] Elsewhere the terms *rtag pa* (permanent) and *chad pa* (nothing) have been translated 'eternalism' and 'nihilism'.

[297] In Tibetan *gti mug chen po*, here synonymous with *chos dbyings ye shes* or wisdom of *dharmadhātu*.

Or something bad to consider as an evil spirit,
Rather all the movements of thought that cause hope or fear
Make our own demon arise within each of us.
From the natural clarity of the vastness of the ultimate dimension of phenomena
All types of thoughts and memories arise
In the same way that (crests and) waves form
On a calm sea.
A person who understands this point
Has no need to correct anything: leave everything just as it is!
When (the concept of) benefiting or disturbing no longer arises
(Everything) self-liberates in the ultimate dimension.
There is no sense in feeling envy, in rejecting or accepting
In relation to what arises from the dimension of the ultimate nature of phenomena:
Without rejecting or accepting, the mind (abides in its) self-arising (condition). ⌘

This is the explanation of the demon that does not block concretely, tied to consciousness, together with the instructions on the way to cut it.

6.1.3. The demon of complacency

From *The Great Collection* (op. 4: p. 457, 5):

⌘ How does the demon of complacency arise?
As common demons and higher demons[298]
Which arise from the delusive mind[299].
If, (dwelling) in a terrifying place you are not troubled by spirits
And this makes you feel proud, the demon of complacency (arises).

[298] The higher demons, tied to the conceptualisation of the experiences of practice, are treated in the section on the demon of ego.

[299] In Tibetan *rigs 'khrul*, read as *rig 'khrul* on the basis of the *Compendium* (*Sa gcad*, in *gDams ngag mdzod*, vol. JA, p. 509) by Kar ma pa Rang byung rdo rje, where it is interpreted as *rang rig 'khrul pa*.

When the signs of the power of your spiritual energy manifest
And through this, merit and riches increase, the demon of distraction (arises).
When you enjoy material prosperity and fame, (defeating) enemies and (helping) friends, the demon of contentment (arises).
When you receive powers form deities or spirits,
When you are surrounded by your children, friends and relatives,
And you feel pleasure and satisfaction, the demon of complacency (arises).
Whatever kind of quality manifests,
Maintaining non-duality between mind and object
Do not at all hold the concept of 'quality' but,
As if facing a dream
Remain naturally free of attachment:
Like the face of a beautiful woman that ornaments render even more enchanting,
Everything that manifests from you becomes your own ornament.
Do not feel proud about this,
Otherwise you will be contaminated by the attachment of the delusive mind.
May this supreme conduct of your own nature free of attachment
Be kept hidden in the hearts of the wise! ⌘

This is the description of the demon of complacency and of the way to cut it.

6.1.4. The demon of ego

From *The Great Collection* (op. 4: p. 458, 1):

⌘ The higher demons are of two types,
Related to the path and to the fruit.
Complacent about the view beyond concepts,
Complacent about meditation on absolute equality,

Complacent about behaviour without discursive thought,
Complacent about (experiences of) the way of your practice:
All these aspects, if engaged with even the slightest (notion of an) object,
Become not the path but the operation of demons.
View and meditation are just names for communicating
And not something to conceptualise with the mind.
Without being conditioned by the idea of the view,
Transform everything that manifests without interruption
Into the ultimate dimension of equality of whatever arises, beyond limits!
Not having any view is the supreme cutting.

Since everything is your self-arising mind
There is no meditation to be carried out by a meditator.
Whatever thought or sensation arises that you notice[300],
Leave it emptily, clearly and limpidly[301]:
Since the real meaning is unchanging, emptily;
Since you have real understanding of it, clearly;
Since it self-liberates in its own condition, limpidly.
Like butter united with more butter,
The meditative stability in which one does not meditate on anything
Is supreme among meditations.

The spontaneous self-liberation of your own natural behaviour
Is not something to engage in with intention;
The state of equality of whatever arises is not maintained by means of antidotes.
If you understand that the demons too are self-arising
They self-liberate in their own state without there being anything to reject.
When your knowledge is stable and secure

[300] In Tibetan *byung tshor*: everything that arises in the mind that one notices, be it a thought, an image, a sensation etc.
[301] In Tibetan *lhan ne lhang nge lham mer*, a reference to the three experiences of emptiness, clarity and sensations of pleasure.

There is nothing to refute in behaviour,
(But) someone who does not have this understanding should not engage in (this) behaviour[302].
According to the tradition of these teachings,
Those with certainty that derives from the sacred empowering flow[303]
Should trample discursive thought.
Gradually obtaining the empowering flow,
Knowledge will certainly arise.
These instructions, revealed in a direct way,
Transcend any sphere of behaviour:
Not to have a behaviour is said to be supreme among behaviours. ⌘

Thus we have read what is meant by 'demon of ego' and what is the way of cutting it, as well as a clear explanation of the authentic principle of Chöd and of how this is the supreme behaviour.

6.2. The way to practise Chöd

With regard to the way to engage in the practice of the Chöd, those who wish to devote more time to it can use the text *Laughter of the Dakinis (gCod yul mkha' 'gro'i gad rgyangs)*[304] by Jigmed Lingpa or another Chöd text of more or less the same length. If you are not able or inclined to engage mainly in the essence of Chöd you can, for example, practise the version found in the Thun books of the Dzogchen Community. Or, if you wish to practise an even simpler version, after having practised the preliminary phases you should chant:

[302] I.e., should not engage in the gCod practice which requires resolute conduct (*brtul zhugs*).

[303] In Tibetan *dam pa'i byin rlabs*, that can also be interpreted as 'empowering flow from a sacred (teacher)'.

[304] The *gCod yul mkha' 'gro gad rgyangs* is a short gCod text rediscovered as a *dgongs gter* by 'Jigs med gling pa, belonging to the *Klong chen snying thig* cycle. (O.N.)

OM MAJIG MALA SÒLVA DÈB
OM I invoke Machigma...etc.[305]

mainly as a Guruyoga to receive the empowering flow, then the short offering of the body that starts with the verses:

PHAT! LUS JESZÌN BǑRVAS
PHAT! Giving up attachment to the body... etc.[306]

and doing the visualisation described therein (invite) the four main guests:

- The threeg Three Jewels (including Guru, Deva and Dakini), the higher guests (to accumulate merit);
- The protectors of the teachings (together with their attendants), the powerful guests (who have qualities);
- The spirits which cause hindrances, the guests of karmic debts (or repayments);
- Beings of the six classes, the guests of compassion.

[305] A specific *upadeśa* as a gCod Guruyoga practice transmitted by Ma gcig lab sgron herself:

⌘ OṂ, I invoke the one mother!
Ā, I invoke the one mother!
HŪṂ, I invoke the one mother!
Empower me with the white OṂ,
Empower me with the red Ā,
Empower me with the blue HŪṂ.
Grant me the great empowerment of Body, Voice and Mind.
Enable me to attain realisation of the Great Mother! ⌘ (O.N.)

[306] An essential offering of the body in order to accumulate merit, contained in the preliminary practices of the *Klong chen snying thig*:

⌘ Having relinquished attachment to the body I have vanquished the demon of the deity.
My mind has gone into space through Brahma's door.
Having vanquished the demon of the lord of death, I become the wrathful (Ḍākini).
With my right hand I vanquish the demon of the passions and with the curved cleaver
I vanquish the demon of the physical body and slice off the top of my skull.
With my right hand I take the brainpan
And place it on the trestle of human skulls of the three kāya.
That corpse that contains the three worlds inside
Melts into nectar by means of the short A and the HĀṂ
And is purified, multiplied and transformed by the power of the three syllables
OṂ Ā HŪṂ. ⌘ (O.N.)

Offers them your own body transformed into a Ganachakra: with the three Vajra syllables OM AH HUM the actual offering that liberates by tasting is empowered as the inexhaustible treasure of the sky[307] Then sounding the syllables HA HO HRI and visualising the offering being purified, multiplied and transformed as needed, the guests are satisfied. In Chöd there are, on the basis on this fundamental visualisation, numerous specific offerings such as the variegated offering[308], the white offering[309], the red offering[310], the black offering[311] and so on, however nothing is missing from the essential method just explained.

[307] In Tibetan *nam mkha'i mdzod*, i.e. an offering as infinite as space.

[308] In Tibetan *khra 'gyed* (the variegated offering). In *Advice on Mountain Retreat* (*Ri chos mtshams kyi zhal gdams*) Karma Chags med says (op. 28: p. 182, 2):

> ⌘ Maintaining the presence of all the guests, from one's body thousands of *ḍākinis* emanate that draw the nectar with a skull ladle and offer it to the teachers of the root transmission who are in celestial space, then to the *yi dams*, the *ḍākinis*, the *dharmapālas*, the worldly guardians, the disturbing entities and the *gdon* (entities that provoke one's energy) living on and under the ground, the beings of the six *lokas* in their specific environments. This, called 'the *kusali* (beggar's) way to accumulate merit', the *tantra* system in which one offers one's own body as Gaṇapūja, is known as the variegated offering and is an essential Gaṇapūja carried out by means of (offering) one's own body. ⌘ (O.N.)

[309] In Tibetan *dkar 'gyed* (white offering). From the same text by Karma Chags med (op. 28: p. 185, 2):

> ⌘ With the nectar of the three white offerings and the three sweet offerings one fills the world and satisfies all the deities and spirits that do not relish the red offerings. With the first offerings one satisfies the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and deities of the Kriyā and Carya (*tantra*). With the remains one satisfies the *gdon*, the disturbing entities and the beings of the six *lokas* wandering in the *bar do*. In short this is the root of the white offering. ⌘ (O.N.)

[310] In Tibetan *dmar 'gyed* (red offering). From the same text by Karma Chags med (op. 28: p. 182, 6):

> ⌘ Imagine a mountain of meat, a lake of blood and a heap of bones, including their lard and warm vapour. Each of the six sections of outer meat and of the nine inner parts multiplies into infinite hundreds of thousands. Meditate thus that the deities and spirits eat it and take away those parts they enjoy most. The remains and the impurities are procured by the weaker entities. This is called the red offering and is a system from the *sūtra*. ⌘

The expressions 'six sections of outer meat' (*phyi sha gzug drug*) and 'nine inner parts' (*nang cha bub dgu*) refer to characteristic apportionment made by butchers when carving the various cuts of meat. (O.N.)

[311] In the 'black offering' (*nag 'gyed*) mainly one visualises the manifestation of ill-

Then, using Buddha's verses that start with:

QOSNÁM SÚGÑÁN DABŬDE
All phenomena are like a reflection...

the gift of the teaching is offered. Then after chanting the dedication and invocation verses that start with:

PHAT! YAR QÒDYUL DRÒNGI TUGDĂM GAÑ
PHAT! May the higher guests be satisfied...

remain integrated in the state of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo without any consideration whatsoever of offerer, those who have received the offering and the offering itself: this is the essence of Chöd to apply as the fundamental point of the practice.

Those practitioners who do not like to always pronounce many words or who do not have suitable circumstances for doing so can engage in the essence of Chöd in the following way. After having practised the Guruyoga using the three syllables OM AH HUM, pronounce the sound PHAT, that represents the non-duality of method and prajña, visualising your consciousness transferring into space and yourself manifesting instantaneously in the form of the wrathful Dakini. With another PHAT invite the guests: with one more PHAT infinite offerings manifest that are first empowered pronouncing OM AH HUM and then purified, multiplied and transformed by pronouncing HA HO HRI into what is needed (by the diverse guests to whom they are proffered). Then, after having satisfied the guests with the offerings, mentally dedicate the merit and virtues to the benefit of other beings empowering (the dedication) with the mantra:

OM DHARE DHARE BHANDARE... etc.

This concise form, too, contains in its entirety the fundamental essence of the practice of Chöd.

nesses as black smoke or black liquid which is offered to the *gdon* and *'dre* entities that cause illnesses (*nad bdag*). (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu)

Engage in this practice only when the conditions of time and place are suitable, and do not ever under any circumstances randomly or casually pronounce the deep and sacred sound PHAT, for as a Tibetan proverb says:

PHAT arouses sleeping spirits.

As has been explained here, practitioners should not remain anchored to the words of the practice but should rather seek as much as possible to adhere to the essential point or authentic principle of the practice itself. Engaging in this way is in harmony with the principle of the Dzogchen teaching and is also perfectly in harmony with the conditions of the current degenerate age. So, I believe it is extremely important always to practise the fundamental principle of Chöd congruent with the circumstances of time and place.

Machig Labdrön

7. THE PRINCIPLE OF YANTRA YOGA IN RELATION TO BEHAVIOUR

In the same way that butter contains the substance of milk, the ultimate essence of all the sutras and tantras transmitted by Buddha, including the method of Chöd that is closely linked with them, is undoubtedly comprised in the tantras, lungs and upadeshas of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo. An element that is indispensable in order to integrate this profound essence of the teaching in the three doors (body, voice and mind) of the practitioner in an authentic manner consists in the Yantra Yoga taught in the *Union of Sun and Moon*[312] text. It is particularly effective in enabling the experiences of the path actually to arise within oneself through behaviour. So it is necessary to learn correctly and to practise as much as possible the pranayama methods and movements as explained in the original text.

7.1. THE NINEFOLD ELIMINATION OF IMPURE AIR COMBINED WITH VISUALISATION

The Yantra Union of Sun and Moon says (op. 20, A: p. 1, 9; B: p. 29, 7):

⌘ In the position of Vairochana, expel the impure air. ⌘

Thus, first of all assume the position of Vairocana with seven characteristics[313] and exhale the impure air nine times. Inhaling, visualise slowly drawing in all the purity or substance of the five elements of the universe in the form of lights of five colours so as to strengthen the condition of the five elements of your own body. Exhaling the impure air, visualise instead that all the hindrances and negative deeds accu-

[312] The *yantra* system called Union of the Sun and Moon (*'Phrul 'khor nyi zla kha sbyor*), whose origin is ascribed to Mahāsiddha Humkāra and Padmasambhava, was transmitted in Tibet by the great translator Vairocana (VIII century) to his disciple g.Yu sgra snying po.

[313] See note 27.

mulated in past lives and all possible illnesses, provocations of energy and all negativity emerge in the form of black smoke and vanish into the natural condition of emptiness of the ultimate nature of phenomena.

This visualisation exercise is carried out not only at the beginning of a session of pranayama and movements of Yantra Yoga but is an extraordinary method to apply regularly before any session of practice.

7.2. The three series of physical training

After having correctly carried out the expulsion of the impure breath you should practise accurately the three groups of exercises that mainly pertain to physical training: the Tsigjong for loosening the joints; the Lungsang exercises to purify the prana; the Tsadul exercises to control the channels. These are indispensable as preliminaries for all yantras.

7.2.1. The loosening exercises for the joints

The root text says (op. 20, A: p.1, 10; B: p. 31, 10):

> ⌘ As a preliminary practice of the physical training one sets in motion the limbs and the five sense doors. ⌘

There are five exercises to loosen the joints:
1. Contracting.
2. Shaking.
3. Pushing.
4. Flexing.
5. Rotating.[314]

Practising these movements, the limbs and joints that have difficulty in moving are loosened and made fit for the practice of the yantras. As a benefit, all the problems and illnesses related to the five sense organs, the head and the four limbs, the joints and the greater and lesser articulated joints, are eliminated as well as prevented.

[314] In Tibetan *sgrim pa, gsil ba, 'phul ba, 'bebs pa, bskor ba.*

7.2.2. The eight movements to purify prana

After having prepared the body for movement with the five loosening exercises for the joints, correctly carry out the eight movements for the purification of the prana which are linked respectively to eight different types of breathing:

1. Slow inhalation.
2. Open hold.
3. Pressure.
4. Rapid exhalation.
5. Rapid inhalation.
6. Closed hold.
7. Contraction.
8. Slow exhalation.[315]

It is necessary to engage in correctly practising these eight yantras to purify the prana until the achievement of perfect mastery of the essential points of each of these eight exercises, in order to be able subsequently to practise any kind of pranayama correctly.

7.2.3. The five exercises to control the channels

From the same text (op. 20, A: p. 2, 14; B: p. 59, 9):

> ⌘ In order to control the channels, straighten the back: through the right nostril exhale the air roughly, through the left nostril inhale slowly and gently, (then) hold the neutral (air) until it pervades the whole body.[316] ⌘

[315] In Tibetan *'jug pa, dgang pa, gzhil ba, 'phen ba, rngub pa, skyil ba, 'dren pa, 'byin pa.* Open retention (*dgang ba*) means remaining filled with air after having inhaled. Pressure (*gzhil ba*) involves a muscular movement by means of which the force of the air is pushed in a direction. Closed retention (*skyil ba*) is the result of having pushed the force of the air downwards, counterbalanced by light pressure of the sphincter upwards. Contraction (*'dren pa*) requires contracting the abdominal muscles towards the spine.

[316] These two ways of breathing are called rough breathing or air (*rtsub rlung*) and gentle breathing or air (*'jam rlung*). Rough breathing means inhaling and exhaling

This describes the method of breathing for controlling the channels, which is followed by five types of movement:

1. Massaging.
2. Stretching the ankles.
3. Rotating the arms.
4. Closing the armpits.
5. Stretching.[317]

Practising these five yantras correctly, disturbances related to the channels and the prana are eliminated, enabling one to engage in the profound Tsalung[318] methods, and various other benefits are obtained. So it is important to practise these exercises until you obtain an actual result.

7.3. The five fundamental pranayamas

In the *Union of Sun and Moon* text, five extraordinary pranayamas are explained as fundamental methods of breathing:

1. The pranayama of the four characteristic conditions[319].
2. The pranayama of the four applications[320].

rapidly and indirectly. Gentle breathing means inhaling and exhaling slowly and directly. Neutral air (*ma ning rlung*) means the condition of *prāṇa* in which the forces of the solar and lunar aspects are balanced.

[317] In Tibetan *mnye ba, long shad, dpung skor, mchan 'bebs, myong ba.*

[318] The expression *rtsa rlung*, literally 'channels and *prāṇa*', denotes all the yogic practices pertaining to control of the channels, the *prāṇa* and the seed-essence or *thig le.*

[319] In Tibetan *de nyid rnam bzhi'i rlung sbyor*: a *prāṇayama* method which mainly involves training in the four phases of open retention (*dgang ba*), pressure (*gzhil ba*), closed retention (*skyil ba*) and contraction (*'dren pa*). (O.N.)

[320] In Tibetan *sbyor ba bzhi ldan gyi rlung sbyor*: a *prāṇayama* method to master *kumbhaka* through the four phases of inhalation (*'jug pa*), closed retention (*skyil ba*), rapid exhalation (*'phen pa*) and empty retention (*rtsa stong du 'khyil ba*). (O.N.) See Chapter II: 3.2.7.3.

3. The pranayama to make the secret prana enter the central channel[321]
4. The pranayama of the seven branches.[322]
5. The pranayama of the six applications[323].

In this regard the root text states (op. 20, A: p. 3, 9; B: p. 70, 6):

⌘ Since the root of Yantra is prana, engaging in the seven types (of breathing): open holding, pressure, closed holding, contrac-

[321] In Tibetan *gsang rlung dbu mar 'jug pa'i rlung sbyor.* From *Yantra Union of the Sun and Moon* (op. 20, A: p. 10, 4; B: p. 8, 9):

⌘ The method to capture the secret *prāṇa* in the central channel. The position is the lotus posture, with the hands gripping the sides with the thumbs pointing forwards and the chest stretched: (this is) the posture of Humchen Kara.

The method of concentration: one's body is a pure, clear dimension. At the centre of this inseparability of appearance and emptiness visualise the central channel having six characteristics, with a luminous blue HŪṂ at the navel. Expand the central channel together with the HŪṂ (so that) it reaches the size of the body, of the place, of the mountains and the sea, until it equals the whole universe: in this way the traces of karmic vision are purified in the ultimate dimension. Then diminish the central channel and the HŪṂ, reducing it to an ever smaller size. (Always) keeping concentrated on the HŪṂ, train in this way on expanding and reabsorbing.

The method of breathing: inhale the karmic *prāṇa* slowly and in a prolonged way through the lunar (*ro ma*) and solar (*rkyang ma*) channels. Capture it in the central channel with a small closed retention, draw in the sides and pull with the force of the HŪṂ. Sweetly emitting the vibration of the HŪṂ sound from the nostrils, lips and teeth, outer and inner karmic visions and all karmic traces are purified, and in clarity the whole universe (becomes) the HŪṂ. In this way perfecting in the inhalation, the closed retention and the expansion and reabsorption of the HŪṂ emitting (the sound), the karmic *prāṇa* will penetrate completely in the central channel and illusory vision will manifest as wisdom. ⌘ (O.N.)

[322] In Tibetan *yan lag bdun ldan gyi rlung sbyor*: a special *prāṇayama* method (also known as the gentle breathing method or *'jam rlung*) that contains the seven phases of: inhalation (*'jug pa*), open retention (*dgang ba*), pressure (*gzhil ba*), closed retention (*skyil ba*), contraction (*'dren pa*), rapid exhalation (*'phen pa*), empty retention (*rtsa stong du 'khyil ba*). (O.N.)

[323] In Tibetan *sbyor ba drug pa'i rlung sbyor*: a special *prāṇayama* method (also known as the rough breathing method or *rtsub rlung*) that utilises the six procedures of: rough inhalation (*rtsub rlung rngub pa*), pressure (*gzhil ba*), closed retention (*skyil ba*), contraction (*'dren pa*), rapid exhalation with HA (*has 'phen pa*), empty retention (*rtsa stong du 'khyil ba*). (O.N.)

tion, empty holding, gentle breathing and rough breathing, one practises the yantras of the five series. ꙮ

Thus we have five series of yantras each with five basic movements, linked respectively to the five fundamental types of holding the breath (i.e., open, with pressure, closed, with contraction, empty). Furthermore, to make progress and perfect the capacity of prana, there exist for every principal movement two subsidiary yantras (giving fifteen yantras in each series). After having learned them in a precise manner, you should choose as your regular practice the method of breathing that is most suited to your condition, and in the same way select from among the various series of yantras five positions corresponding to the five types of holding, bearing in mind your own capacities. So you should practise such a personalised daily session of Yantra. I am convinced that in this way you can realise the true aim of the practice of Tsalung and also have guaranteed a good condition of health and other extraordinary benefits.

7.4. The seven lotus postures

There are seven yantras known as 'the seven lotus positions':
1. The flaming lotus.
2. The arched lotus.
3. The twisted lotus.
4. The suspended lotus.
5. The swinging lotus.
6. The leaping lotus
7. The snaking lotus.[324]

Through practising them it is possible to realise the development of heat and of the sensation of pleasure and the other signs of Tsalung

[324] In Tibetan *pad ma 'bar ba, pad ma dgyed pa, pad ma 'khyil ba, pad ma lding ba, pad ma 'khril ba, pad ma 'bebs pa, pad ma 'khyugs pa.*

practice, to achieve control of the five elements, to activate[325] the channels, prana and seed-essence and to swiftly realise their power, together with many other benefits.

7.5. The way to conclude a Yantra session

It is necessary to conclude a session of practice of Yantra Yoga based on one of the five fundamental pranayamas with the movements of the Wave of the Vajra[326], with the aim of eliminating any possible defects (provoked by any mistakes in performance). However, as regards the true goal of all the pranayamas and yantras, the root text says (op. 20, A: p. 30, 6; B: p. 251, 8):

> ⌘ As the final method of the essence of the *Magical Manifestation*[327] one should apply the state of self-perfection of Dzogpa Chenpo. ⌘

This means that the practitioner must approach the profound meaning of the base, path and fruit of Dzogchen Ati and engage in it in the correct manner.

[325] In Tibetan *las su rung ba*, an expression that can also be rendered 'ripening in a perfect way' enabling them to perform perfectly their specific functions.
[326] In Tibetan *rdo rje'i rba rlabs*.
[327] In Tibetan *sgyu 'phrul*, see note 241.

Vairochana

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE REALISATION OF THE FRUIT

The Garland of Views (op. 21, A: p. 172, 5; B: p. 25, 2) says:

> ⌘ So (through) this method, that represents the true sense of the final goal of Total Perfection, one spontaneously enters the level of the Great Accumulation of the Chakra of Letters. Those with supreme capacity of understanding recognise from the beginning the state of original enlightenment and become familiar with it directly[328]. However this is not possible for ordinary people. ⌘

"The true sense of the final goal of Total Perfection" at the beginning of the quotation should be understood to mean the final goal of all the paths, from the path of the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas to the path of Ati.

1. THE LEVEL OF ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS VEHICLE

The Hinayana vehicle of the Shravakas deems it necessary to traverse the four levels called: one who has entered the stream, once-returner, non-returner, Arhat[329].

The Hinayana vehicle of the Pratyekabuddhas deems it necessary also to progress through their own various specific levels of realisation.

In the Mahayana, after having traversed the five paths of accumulation, application, vision, meditation and no more learning and after having traversed one after the other the ten levels of realisation or bhumis mentioned above, one finally attains the true bhumi of final enlightenment. In fact Rongzompa's commentary says (op. 31: p. 262, 6):

[328] In some editions *goms pa drag rdal tu 'gro ba*, become familiar directly, reads *gom pa drag rdal tu 'gro ba*, traverse directly.

[329] See note 117.

⌘ In general the diverse traditions list diverse levels of enlightenment. In the Philosophical Characteristics Vehicle the bhumi of enlightenment is usually called Total Light. The name derives from the fact that, thanks to the radiation of many rays of light (from the dimension of enlightenment) beings become suitable (to receive wisdom). ⌘

2. THE THREE BHUMIS OF ENLIGHTENMENT ACCORDING TO VAJRAYANA

Rongzompa's commentary says (op. 31: p. 262, 20):

⌘ In Vajrayana generally there are deemed to be three bhumis of enlightenement: the bhumi of Total Light, the Lotus-endowed bhumi, the bhumi of the Great Accumulation of the Chakra of Letters.
(The) Total Light (level is so called) because the dharmakaya free of characteristic attributes, being by its very nature luminous clarity, is all pervading.
(The) Lotus-endowed (level is so called) because, even though with concept-free prajña there is nothing to perceive in relation to dharmakaya this condition itself is the base of the potentiality of the (compassionate) energy free of attachment.
(The) Great Accumulation of the Chakra of Letters (level is so called because) in that moment one effortlessly realises the self-perfected state of wisdom and of the mandala with characteristic attributes[330]. The letters (in fact) are of two types: of wisdom and of the characteristic attributes[331]. The (letters of the) characteristic attributes are in their turn subdivided in two types: of names and of forms. The forms too are of two types: those that are complete and those that appear partially.

[330] In Tibetan *mtshan ma'i dkyil 'khor*, the manifestation of the *maṇḍala* with all its characteristic symbolic attributes.
[331] In Tibetan *ye shes dang mtshan ma*. 'Letters of wisdom' indicates the manifestation of the letters within a pure dimension.

This great accumulation of the mandala of existence, that manifests self-perfected as the fruit, is called 'the bhumi of the great accumulation of the chakra of letters' and also the thirteenth bhumi of enlightenment.
The tantra called *The Ornament of the Essence of the Vajra* (*rDo rje snying po rgyan gyi rgyud*) speaks of twelve levels of enlightenment, explained in this way: two (linked respectively) with method and prajña, five (linked with the five) kayas[332] and (five more linked with) the five wisdoms, twelve in total. Furthermore the same text asserts:

The supreme bhumi is that of the Vidyadhara.

And:

The supreme bhumi is (that of) method and prajña.

In other texts it is called 'the bhumi of Vajradhara' or 'the indivisible bhumi of Samantabhadra', 'the bhumi of supreme wisdom' etc.[333], however these always refer to the same principle, and the use of different names is due to the different kinds of qualities being underlined. ⌘

[332] The five *kāyas* or dimensions (*sku lnga*) are: *dharmakāya* (*chos sku*), *saṃbhogakāya* (*longs sku*), *nirmāṇakāya* (*sprul sku*), plus the *kāya* of the essential nature or *svabhāvikakāya* (*ngo bo nyid sku*) and the indestructible *kāya* or *vajrakāya* (*rdo rje'i sku*). (O.N.) The *svabhāvikakāya* is related primarily to the basic condition of all the other *kāyas* while the *vajrakāya* refers mainly to their natural qualities. (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu)

[333] In Tibetan *rdo rje 'dzin gyi sa, kun tu bzang po dbye ba med pa'i sa, ye shes bla ma'i sa*, respectively.

3. THE REAL MEANING OF THE GREAT ACCUMULATION OF THE CHAKRA OF LETTERS

The commentary *Light of the Sun* by Jamgön Kongtrul says (op. 11: p. 348, 5):

> ⌘ In his commentary, Rongzompa explains the subdivision of the letters in two types, of wisdom and of characteristic attributes, while (Longchenpa's) *Elimination of Darkness in the Ten Directions (Phyogs bcu mun sel)* explains that the letters, spreading like clouds, manifest as a 'great accumulation of letters' that take on the form of letters miraculously emanated (on the one hand) and of letters that (verbally) communicate the teaching (on the other)[334].
> Furthermore, *Tsangtig (gTsang tik)* explains:
>
> As regards the 'letters', all phenomena exist only inasmuch as they are designated by the letters of names and words and apart from this they are by nature devoid of existence. However, simultaneous with this absence (of actuality) everything that appears is (the manifestation of) the chakra of the basic dimensions and of the wisdom that exists from the beginning as the great self-perfected accumulation of merit and wisdom.
>
> In any case, the (Sanskrit corresponding to) the word 'letter', that is akshara, can also mean 'unchanging'[335]. In fact, the (famous verse of the) *Manjushrinamasangiti* that states "the supreme utterly pure letter" is rendered in a quotation found in the commentary (to *Kalachakra* called) *Stainless Light (Dri med 'od)* "the supreme unchanging utterly pure (state)". From this one

[334] In Tibetan *sprul pa cho 'phrul gyi yi ge* and *chos ston pa brda'i yi ge*. The former, for example, manifest as seed syllables, *mantra* and so on, while the latter communicate at the verbal level.

[335] The Sanskrit term *akṣara*, that means 'unchanging', is also used as a synonym of 'letter' inasmuch as the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, divided in vocals (*āli*) and consonants (*kāli*) represent the origin of the whole of existence.

⌘ Concerning the asceticism of the Shravakas, it is written in the *Vinaya ('Dul ba)*:

Do not commit negative actions,
Practise virtue perfectly,
Tame your mind completely:
This is Buddha's teaching.

Thus according to the (Shravakas') view all virtuous and non-virtuous dharmas exist distinctly both relatively and absolutely, (consequently) they engage in asceticism and resolute conduct in practising virtue and rejecting negative deeds. ⌘

Rongzompa's commentary explains (op. 31: p. 267, 6):

⌘ (Buddhists' asceticism) is illustrated by means of a quotation from Buddha that epitomises the meaning of the three trainings. *Do not commit negative actions* pertains to training in morality, that is to all the aspects of morality aimed at refraining from trespasses of body and voice that cause rebirth in the lower states, such as killing, stealing, improper sexual conduct and lying, that are the gravest among the ten non-virtuous actions, and other reprehensible actions.
Practise virtue perfectly pertains to training in prajña, that is to all the teachings subsumed in the prajña of the precise understanding of the Four Noble Truths that enable entry onto the noble path and attainment of the fruit.
Tame your mind completely pertains to higher training of the mind (contemplation): ordinary people, in fact, are naturally attracted to the five objects of enjoyment whence they always rely on the field of experience that constitutes the cause of all the passions. Higher practitioners instead, mastering their mind through the power of meditative stability, of samadhi and of the states of absorption in equanimity, cultivate contemplation that removes them from the sphere of experience of impure vision and enables them to enter the sphere of experience of total purity. ⌘

And, regarding the meaning of the phrase *all virtuous and non-virtuous dharmas exist distinctly both relatively and absolutely* (op. 31: p. 269, 4):

⌘ 'Exist' is an assertion based on logic, hence existence is discussed (in terms) of both the relative and absolute. In fact all the phenomena that appear to the relative consciousness also appear to the absolute consciousness. Thus they are said to 'exist in both' The fact that the word 'truth' is not added means that such an assertion is the result of hampered (knowledge). In fact (the absolute and the relative) cannot both be truth. If the relative is deemed true the absolute cannot be deemed true and vice versa. Thus the intention here is to demonstrate existence and not truth, consequently it is said that (virtues and non-virtues) exist distinctly both in the relative and in the absolute. ⌘

3.2. The asceticism of the Bodhisattvas

The Garland of Views (op. 21, A: p. 174, 5; B: p. 26, 4) says:

⌘ Regarding the asceticism of the Bodhisattvas, *The Vows of the Bodhisattvas (Byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa)* states:

Not committing (destructive) deeds motivated by circumstances,
Not using miraculous powers or threats etc.
Having love and compassion
And virtuous intention, there is no stain.

This (means that) if you are rooted in total compassion whatever action you undertake, whether virtuous or non-virtuous, your vow will not be stained because in the last analysis the Bodhisattva vow is based on the behaviour of total compassion. ⌘

Rongzompa's commentary explains (op. 31: p. 270, 3):

⌘ Cultivating the intention to obtain the wisdom of omniscience to release all beings from the ocean of samsara is the fundamental point of the (Bodhisattva) vow. In fact, until one attains the wisdom of omniscience, helping others is not really possible. In order to attain it Bodhichitta, whose essence is compassion, is necessary as the first cause; total compassion as the root; and skill in methods for the final perfection: these three elements must not be lacking. Their opposites, the negative deeds that by their very nature cause transgression of the Bodhisattva (vow), are of four kinds: the opposite of keeping Bodhichitta whole is losing Bodhichitta; the opposite of total compassion that constitutes its root is not protecting beings due to avarice and harming them due to malice; the opposite of skill in methods for the final perfection is completely abandoning the sacred Dharma. Thus if one does not commit these four transgressions that consist in abandoning the sacred Dharma, losing Bodhichitta, being avaricious and harming others, and if one is always rooted in compassion, then whenever (circumstances require) the destruction of beings through one's body and voice then one must do this. In fact *not committing destructive deeds motivated by circumstances*[285] means that Bodhisattvas breaks their vow if they are aware of being able to emancipate someone by destroying (a life) but do not do it.

In the same way, *not using miraculous powers or threats etc.* means that, even though deceiving, deriding, threatening etc., exhibiting miraculous powers are not sacred actions, if they can emancipate (someone) but are not utilised this transgresses (the vow). (In the text) this is (affirmatively) implied in the (two) phrases stated in the negative.

Having love and compassion and virtuous intention, there is no stain instead is meant literally: if one's thought is based on love and compassion, and thus one's intention is virtuous, then even performing fierce actions does not cause a defect in one's vow. ⌘

[285] The original text reads *rkyen du 'tshams par don mi byed* while Rong zom pa's commentary has *rkyen du 'tshams par tshar mi gcod.*

The Garland of Views (op. 21, A: p.175, 2; B: p. 26, 6) says:

⌘ Regarding supreme asceticism, *The Sutra of the Great Promise (Dam tshig chen po'i mdo)* says:

When one is certain in Buddha's vehicle
Then even enjoying the five passions and five sense objects
One's morality remains intact
Like a lotus (that grows) in mud.

In fact, as from the beginning all phenomena are in a condition of equality there is no compassion to cultivate or hatred to abandon. However this does not mean not feeling compassionate towards those who do not have this understanding. On the basis of the view of understanding of total purity, one applies asceticism and resolute conduct in a pure manner[286]. ⌘

Rongzompa's commentary explains (op. 31: p. 272, 4):

⌘ *When one is certain in Buddha's vehicle* refers to having a mind utterly apprised of the deep meaning of method and prajña and to having a mode of thought apprised of the condition of equality.
Then even enjoying the five passions and five sense objects one's morality remains intact like a lotus (that grows) in mud means that even if an action is carried out it is not accumulated (as a

[286] The Tibetan *ji ltar lta bas ye nas rnam par dag par rtogs pa bzhin du dka' thub dang brtul zhugs kyang de ltar rnam par dag par spyod* is based on the edition published together with Rong zom pa's commentary in *Selected Writings of Rong Zom Chos-kyi Bzang-po*, Leh 1974, pp. 1-18. Most editions have *ji ltar lta bas ye nas rnam par rtog pa dang mi rtog pa bzhin du dka' thub dang brtul zhugs kyang de ltar rnam par dag pa dang ma dag pa spyod do*, which means "according to whether from the beginning one's view is conditioned by or free of concepts there ensue pure and impure asceticism and resolute conduct, respectively."

negative karma). In fact, according to *The Vows of Individual Liberation (So sor thar pa'i mdo)*:

An action carried out with the intention to benefit others
From grievous can become less grievous[287]

And *The Bodhisattvas' Sutra (Byang chub sems dpa'i mdo)* says:

Grievous actions committed on the basis of a compassionate intention not only do not entail transgression (of the vow) but (instead) perfectly maintain the vow.

In this case this means that, if your mind is rooted in the state of equality, any action you carry out is not stained by faults and furthermore you perfectly maintain the Shravaka morality and all the Bodhisattva trainings. Thus if your mind is ruled by (understanding of) the equality of all phenomena no conflict can arise.
In conclusion, the Shravaka vow consists in avoiding actions that can harm others.
The Bodhisattva vow consists not only in avoiding harming others but also in actually acting to help them.
As well as avoiding harming others and actually acting to help them, the Secret Mantra vow consists in practising the Tathagata's activities.
Furthermore, the most important things in the Shravaka vow are the basic proposition and the concrete activity (relative to karma). Bodhisattvas ascribe greater importance to compassion. In Secret Mantra greater importance is attributed to prajña. Furthermore, Shravakas emulate the noble Arhats of the past. Bodhisattvas emulate the Bodhisattvas of the higher levels of realisation. In Secret Mantra one directly emulates the Tathagatas.
Many other things could be said in this regard, but let us return to our text. For those applying the samaya of great equality of

[287] I.e., a grievous transgression (*pham pa*) becomes less grievous (*sbam po*).

Secret Mantra nothing impure exists. Thus it is said that *on the basis of the view of understanding of total purity, one applies asceticism and resolute conduct in a pure manner.* In fact this passage summarises the samaya of total equality of Secret Mantra. From this we can infer, even though it is not stated explicitly, that ineluctably ascetic practices and resolute conduct based on impure views are applied in an impure manner. ꕥ

We have thus read a description of the various methods of engaging in ascetic practices and resolute conduct in the diverse traditions. Nevertheless the term 'supreme asceticism' found in reference to the supreme vehicle is used only in order to understand that engaging in the state of total equality and purity represents or replaces all the kinds of ascetic conduct of the other vehicles. In reality, the behaviour of Samantabhadra of Ati Dzogchen, that is the condition of total equality, completely transcends the effort (entailed) in any ascetic practice.

4. THE NEED TO INTEGRATE ALL MODES OF CONDUCT IN THE BEHAVIOUR OF SAMANTABHADRA

There are differences in the ways of engaging in behaviour according to the nature and fundamental characteristics of the path on which it is based:

- Conduct in conformity with the sutras, thus based on the path of renunciation, of the Hinayana or Mahayana traditions, including the various modes of behaviour related to the gradual or direct methods[288].
- Conduct in conformity with the outer and inner tantras, thus based on the principles of purification and of transformation.
- The behaviour of Samantabhadra of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, based on the swift path of self-liberation.

[288] The two great streams of the Mahāyāna tradition are: the gradual (*rim gyis pa*) stream, which attributes great importance to study and the preliminary practices, such as was upheld in Tibet by Kamalaśila; and the direct (*cig char ba*) stream, such as Chinese Ch'an and Japanese Zen, in which the practitioner directly accesses the absolute state by means of non-conceptual meditation.

However, those who follow the Dzogchen teaching on the basis of clear understanding of the fundamental characteristics of the kinds of conduct applied in the diverse paths should engage until they are able to integrate or unify their essential points in the dimension of the behaviour of Samantabhadra of Ati. This is in perfect accord with the authentic principle of the Dzogchen teaching.

5. THE BEHAVIOUR OF SAMANTABHADRA OF ATI

What is the behaviour of Samantabhadra of Ati? *The All-creating King* root tantra says (op. 1: p. 236, 6):

ཨཿ Listen! I will explain to you the behaviour of the All-creating King:
All virtues and negativities, accepting and rejecting, pure and impure, large and small
Are one single thing in unborn bodhichitta:
So understand that there is nothing to accept or reject!
Understand (the state) beyond pure and impure!
Understand that there is no difference between acting and not acting!
Understand that which cannot be subdivided in centre and boundary!
Understand that the root is unborn bodhichitta!

Listen, I will explain to you the behaviour of the All-creating King:
Whatever action you do, no conflicts arise,
Because both acting and not acting are unborn:
Recognising this, whatever action you do remains the unborn.

Listen! The behaviour of the All-creating King, that is me,
Being similar to space cannot be limited or measured,
Being non-dual, it transcends the limits of being and non-being:
Understand that this is the behaviour of all-creating bodhichitta!

Understand that the five objects of enjoyment[289] too are the behaviour of bodhichitta!
Understand that the five (emotions such as) attachment and anger[290] are the behaviour of bodhichitta!
Understand that the five ornamental causes[291] are the behaviour of bodhichitta!
Understand that the three worlds and the three spheres of existence[292] are the behaviour of bodhichitta!
Behaviour which ignores the unborn
Has never been taught by me, forebear of all the Enlightened Ones. ⌘

[289] The five objects of enjoyment (*'dod pa lnga*) are: form, that can be beautiful or ugly; sound, that can be pleasant or unpleasant; smell, that can be agreeable or disagreeable; taste, that can be good or bad; touch, that can be soft or rough. They are the object of attachment or, conversely, of aversion. (O.N.)

[290] The five passions or disturbing emotions (in the text: *chags sdang lnga*) are: attachment, anger, ignorance, pride, jealousy. (O.N.)

[291] The five ornamental causes (*rgyan gyi rgyu lnga*) are the five elements: earth, water, fire, air, space. (O.N.)

[292] The three realms (*khams gsum*) are: the formless realm, the form realm and the passion realm. The three spheres of existence (*srid gsum*) are: the dimension of the Devas above, the dimension of the gNyan in intermediate space, the dimension of the Nāgas below. At times the term *srid gsum* can also be used as a synonym of *'jig rten gsum* or *khams gsum*. (O.N.)

6. CHÖD: THE METHOD PERFECTLY CONNECTED WITH THE CONDUCTS IN THE SUTRAS AND TANTRAS

An extraordinary method closely linked to the principle of behaviour of all the sutra and tantra teachings transmitted by the perfect Bhagavan Buddha is the Chöd or Cutting of Demons, an authentic teaching with all the true qualities which is the fruit of the experience of the lady teacher Machig Labkyi Drönma (1031-1129).

The Chöd is an extraordinary teaching that embraces and unifies the essence of the sutra teachings of the Prajñaparamita, of the Mahamudra upadeshas of Secret Mantra and of the fundamental principle of the supreme Dzogchen teaching. However, the way to practise Chöd and the name itself of this profound practice certainly originated from the lady teacher Machig Labkyi Drönma. In fact, the teachings on Chöd by the Acharya Aryadeva, the Secret Chöd of Naropa[293], the various termas related to Chöd attributed to Padmasambhava and his disciples and the Chöd termas of the Bon tradition[294] were all called by this name in later times because they contain the principle of Chöd, but there is no proof that the name Chöd was in use in ancient times.

Many great Ati teachers of the past, and in particular the teacher of my two root teachers Changchub Dorje (1826-1961) and Ayu Khandro (1838-1953), the Vidyadhara Nyagla Padma Dündul (1816-1872) and his disciples, the Siddha Ogyen Tendzin (1893-1959) who realised the rainbow body etc., adopted Chöd as the fundamental point of the aspect of behaviour of Dzogpa Chenpo. Thus it is really important for practitioners of Santi Maha Sangha too to integrate this practice perfectly in the base of the teaching.

[293] In Tibetan *Aryadeva'i gcod kyi gdams pa* and *Na ro gsang gcod.* Many instructions on gCod are found in volume JA of the *gDams ngag mdzod.*

[294] The most famous gCod of the Bon tradition is the *mKha' 'gro gsang gcod,* a *gter ma* rediscovered in the XIV century.

The Great Collection (bKa' tshoms chen mo) attributed to Machig Labdrönma herself states (op. 4: p. 456, 5):

⌘ The root of demons is our mind:
When we perceive something as an external object
And feel desire and attachment we are captured by demons,
Contaminated by the mind that grasps objects.
There are four types of demons:
The demon that blocks [based on external objects],
The demon that does not block [based on mental judgment within][295],
The demon of complacency [based on the manifestation of our own qualities],
The demon of ego [based on dualistic thought].
All of these can be subsumed in the demon of ego. ⌘

Here we have read a general description of the four demons that have to be cut, and how the root of all of them is ego.

6.1.1. The demon that blocks

From *The Great Collection* (op. 4: p. 456, 6):

⌘ There are many demons that block:
When an object appears before our senses
And we judge it, rejecting or accepting, the demon that blocks (arises)
And due to our consideration of (the object's) concreteness we bind ourselves to samsara.
Yet form by its very nature is empty:
Do not get attached to form, meditate (recognising it as) emptiness!

[295] The terms *thogs bcas kyi bdud* and *thogs med kyi bdud* are often translated 'tangible demons' and 'intangible demons'; the term *thogs* in any case signifies a material obstacle that blocks or hinders.

Feeling no attachment to form
You liberate yourself from the demon of believing in something permanent.
Without making emptiness (an object of) meditation for the mind,
You surely liberate yourself from the demon of (believing in) nothingness[296].
The manifestation of form cannot be blocked:
(If) we do not consider it something concrete, it is only the light of our vision;
(This applies to) sounds, smells, tastes, (objects of) touch
And of the mind, etc., which self-liberate in the same way.
The mind is the demon that does not block (concretely),
That which manifests through the senses
Is the demon that blocks.
Everything that appears before the sense organs
Cut it directly by the state of self-liberation!
Transform it indissolubly into Great Ignorance![297] ཞ

This is the explanation of the demon that blocks, linked to sense perception, together with the instructions on the general way to cut it and on the specific way to engage in cutting based on the principle of self-liberation of Ati.

6.1.2. The demon that does not block

From *The Great Collection* (op. 4: p. 457, 2):

ཞ How does the demon that does not block arise?
Discriminating thoughts that judge
In terms of good and bad what appears before our mind
Are the demon that does not block (concretely).
Beyond our self-arising mind
(There does not exist) something good to consider as a deity

[296] Elsewhere the terms *rtag pa* (permanent) and *chad pa* (nothing) have been translated 'eternalism' and 'nihilism'.
[297] In Tibetan *gti mug chen po*, here synonymous with *chos dbyings ye shes* or wisdom of *dharmadhātu*.

Or something bad to consider as an evil spirit,
Rather all the movements of thought that cause hope or fear
Make our own demon arise within each of us.
From the natural clarity of the vastness of the ultimate dimension of phenomena
All types of thoughts and memories arise
In the same way that (crests and) waves form
On a calm sea.
A person who understands this point
Has no need to correct anything: leave everything just as it is!
When (the concept of) benefiting or disturbing no longer arises
(Everything) self-liberates in the ultimate dimension.
There is no sense in feeling envy, in rejecting or accepting
In relation to what arises from the dimension of the ultimate nature of phenomena:
Without rejecting or accepting, the mind (abides in its) self-arising (condition). ꕥ

This is the explanation of the demon that does not block concretely, tied to consciousness, together with the instructions on the way to cut it.

6.1.3. The demon of complacency

From *The Great Collection* (op. 4: p. 457, 5):

ꕥ How does the demon of complacency arise?
As common demons and higher demons[298]
Which arise from the delusive mind[299].
If, (dwelling) in a terrifying place you are not troubled by spirits
And this makes you feel proud, the demon of complacency (arises).

[298] The higher demons, tied to the conceptualisation of the experiences of practice, are treated in the section on the demon of ego.

[299] In Tibetan *rigs 'khrul*, read as *rig 'khrul* on the basis of the *Compendium* (*Sa gcad*, in *gDams ngag mdzod*, vol. JA, p. 509) by Kar ma pa Rang byung rdo rje, where it is interpreted as *rang rig 'khrul pa*.

When the signs of the power of your spiritual energy manifest
And through this, merit and riches increase, the demon of distraction (arises).
When you enjoy material prosperity and fame, (defeating) enemies and (helping) friends, the demon of contentment (arises).
When you receive powers form deities or spirits,
When you are surrounded by your children, friends and relatives,
And you feel pleasure and satisfaction, the demon of complacency (arises).
Whatever kind of quality manifests,
Maintaining non-duality between mind and object
Do not at all hold the concept of 'quality' but,
As if facing a dream
Remain naturally free of attachment:
Like the face of a beautiful woman that ornaments render even more enchanting,
Everything that manifests from you becomes your own ornament.
Do not feel proud about this,
Otherwise you will be contaminated by the attachment of the delusive mind.
May this supreme conduct of your own nature free of attachment
Be kept hidden in the hearts of the wise! ⌘

This is the description of the demon of complacency and of the way to cut it.

6.1.4. The demon of ego

From *The Great Collection* (op. 4: p. 458, 1):

⌘ The higher demons are of two types,
Related to the path and to the fruit.
Complacent about the view beyond concepts,
Complacent about meditation on absolute equality,

Complacent about behaviour without discursive thought,
Complacent about (experiences of) the way of your practice:
All these aspects, if engaged with even the slightest (notion of an) object,
Become not the path but the operation of demons.
View and meditation are just names for communicating
And not something to conceptualise with the mind.
Without being conditioned by the idea of the view,
Transform everything that manifests without interruption
Into the ultimate dimension of equality of whatever arises, beyond limits!
Not having any view is the supreme cutting.

Since everything is your self-arising mind
There is no meditation to be carried out by a meditator.
Whatever thought or sensation arises that you notice[300],
Leave it emptily, clearly and limpidly[301]:
Since the real meaning is unchanging, emptily;
Since you have real understanding of it, clearly;
Since it self-liberates in its own condition, limpidly.
Like butter united with more butter,
The meditative stability in which one does not meditate on anything
Is supreme among meditations.

The spontaneous self-liberation of your own natural behaviour
Is not something to engage in with intention;
The state of equality of whatever arises is not maintained by means of antidotes.
If you understand that the demons too are self-arising
They self-liberate in their own state without there being anything to reject.
When your knowledge is stable and secure

[300] In Tibetan *byung tshor*: everything that arises in the mind that one notices, be it a thought, an image, a sensation etc.
[301] In Tibetan *lhan ne lhang nge lham mer*, a reference to the three experiences of emptiness, clarity and sensations of pleasure.

There is nothing to refute in behaviour,
(But) someone who does not have this understanding should not engage in (this) behaviour[302]
According to the tradition of these teachings,
Those with certainty that derives from the sacred empowering flow[303]
Should trample discursive thought.
Gradually obtaining the empowering flow,
Knowledge will certainly arise.
These instructions, revealed in a direct way,
Transcend any sphere of behaviour:
Not to have a behaviour is said to be supreme among behaviours. ཨཿ

Thus we have read what is meant by 'demon of ego' and what is the way of cutting it, as well as a clear explanation of the authentic principle of Chöd and of how this is the supreme behaviour.

6.2. The way to practise Chöd

With regard to the way to engage in the practice of the Chöd, those who wish to devote more time to it can use the text *Laughter of the Dakinis (gCod yul mkha' 'gro'i gad rgyangs)*[304] by Jigmed Lingpa or another Chöd text of more or less the same length. If you are not able or inclined to engage mainly in the essence of Chöd you can, for example, practise the version found in the Thun books of the Dzogchen Community. Or, if you wish to practise an even simpler version, after having practised the preliminary phases you should chant:

[302] I.e., should not engage in the gCod practice which requires resolute conduct (*brtul zhugs*).

[303] In Tibetan *dam pa'i byin rlabs*, that can also be interpreted as 'empowering flow from a sacred (teacher)'.

[304] The *gCod yul mkha' 'gro gad rgyangs* is a short gCod text rediscovered as a *dgongs gter* by 'Jigs med gling pa, belonging to the *Klong chen snying thig* cycle. (O.N.)

OM MAJIG MALA SÒLVA DÈB
OM I invoke Machigma...etc.[305]

mainly as a Guruyoga to receive the empowering flow, then the short offering of the body that starts with the verses:

PHAT! LUS JESZÌN BǑRVAS
PHAT! Giving up attachment to the body... etc.[306]

and doing the visualisation described therein (invite) the four main guests:

- The threeg Three Jewels (including Guru, Deva and Dakini), the higher guests (to accumulate merit);
The protectors of the teachings (together with their attendants), the powerful guests (who have qualities);
- The spirits which cause hindrances, the guests of karmic debts (or repayments);
- Beings of the six classes, the guests of compassion.

[305] A specific *upadeśa* as a gCod Guruyoga practice transmitted by Ma gcig lab sgron herself:
⌘ OṂ, I invoke the one mother!
Ā, I invoke the one mother!
HŪṂ, I invoke the one mother!
Empower me with the white OṂ,
Empower me with the red Ā,
Empower me with the blue HŪṂ.
Grant me the great empowerment of Body, Voice and Mind.
Enable me to attain realisation of the Great Mother! ⌘ (O.N.)

[306] An essential offering of the body in order to accumulate merit, contained in the preliminary practices of the *Klong chen snying thig*:
⌘ Having relinquished attachment to the body I have vanquished the demon of the deity.
My mind has gone into space through Brahma's door .
Having vanquished the demon of the lord of death, I become the wrathful (Ḍākini).
With my right hand I vanquish the demon of the passions and with the curved cleaver
I vanquish the demon of the physical body and slice off the top of my skull.
With my right hand I take the brainpan
And place it on the trestle of human skulls of the three kāya.
That corpse that contains the three worlds inside
Melts into nectar by means of the short A and the HĀṂ
And is purified, multiplied and transformed by the power of the three syllables
OṂ Ā HŪṂ. ⌘ (O.N.)

Offers them your own body transformed into a Ganachakra: with the three Vajra syllables OM AH HUM the actual offering that liberates by tasting is empowered as the inexhaustible treasure of the sky[307] Then sounding the syllables HA HO HRI and visualising the offering being purified, multiplied and transformed as needed, the guests are satisfied. In Chöd there are, on the basis on this fundamental visualisation, numerous specific offerings such as the variegated offering[308], the white offering[309], the red offering[310], the black offering[311] and so on, however nothing is missing from the essential method just explained.

[307] In Tibetan *nam mkha'i mdzod*, i.e. an offering as infinite as space.

[308] In Tibetan *khra 'gyed* (the variegated offering). In *Advice on Mountain Retreat* (*Ri chos mtshams kyi zhal gdams*) Karma Chags med says (op. 28: p. 182, 2):

> ⌘ Maintaining the presence of all the guests, from one's body thousands of *ḍākinis* emanate that draw the nectar with a skull ladle and offer it to the teachers of the root transmission who are in celestial space, then to the *yi dams*, the *ḍākinis*, the *dharmapālas*, the worldly guardians, the disturbing entities and the *gdon* (entities that provoke one's energy) living on and under the ground, the beings of the six *lokas* in their specific environments. This, called 'the *kusali* (beggar's) way to accumulate merit', the *tantra* system in which one offers one's own body as Gaṇapūja, is known as the variegated offering and is an essential Gaṇapūja carried out by means of (offering) one's own body. ⌘ (O.N.)

[309] In Tibetan *dkar 'gyed* (white offering). From the same text by Karma Chags med (op. 28: p. 185, 2):

> ⌘ With the nectar of the three white offerings and the three sweet offerings one fills the world and satisfies all the deities and spirits that do not relish the red offerings. With the first offerings one satisfies the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and deities of the Kriyā and Carya (*tantra*). With the remains one satisfies the *gdon*, the disturbing entities and the beings of the six *lokas* wandering in the *bar do*. In short this is the root of the white offering. ⌘ (O.N.)

[310] In Tibetan *dmar 'gyed* (red offering). From the same text by Karma Chags med (op. 28: p. 182, 6):

> ⌘ Imagine a mountain of meat, a lake of blood and a heap of bones, including their lard and warm vapour. Each of the six sections of outer meat and of the nine inner parts multiplies into infinite hundreds of thousands. Meditate thus that the deities and spirits eat it and take away those parts they enjoy most. The remains and the impurities are procured by the weaker entities. This is called the red offering and is a system from the *sūtra*. ⌘

The expressions 'six sections of outer meat' (*phyi sha gzug drug*) and 'nine inner parts' (*nang cha bub dgu*) refer to characteristic apportionment made by butchers when carving the various cuts of meat. (O.N.)

[311] In the 'black offering' (*nag 'gyed*) mainly one visualises the manifestation of ill-

Then, using Buddha's verses that start with:

QOSNÁM SÚGÑÁN DABŬDE
All phenomena are like a reflection...

the gift of the teaching is offered. Then after chanting the dedication and invocation verses that start with:

PHAT! YAR QÒDYUL DRÒNGI TUGDĂM GAÑ
PHAT! May the higher guests be satisfied...

remain integrated in the state of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo without any consideration whatsoever of offerer, those who have received the offering and the offering itself: this is the essence of Chöd to apply as the fundamental point of the practice.

Those practitioners who do not like to always pronounce many words or who do not have suitable circumstances for doing so can engage in the essence of Chöd in the following way. After having practised the Guruyoga using the three syllables OM AH HUM, pronounce the sound PHAT, that represents the non-duality of method and prajña, visualising your consciousness transferring into space and yourself manifesting instantaneously in the form of the wrathful Dakini. With another PHAT invite the guests: with one more PHAT infinite offerings manifest that are first empowered pronouncing OM AH HUM and then purified, multiplied and transformed by pronouncing HA HO HRI into what is needed (by the diverse guests to whom they are proffered). Then, after having satisfied the guests with the offerings, mentally dedicate the merit and virtues to the benefit of other beings empowering (the dedication) with the mantra:

OM DHARE DHARE BHANDARE... etc.

This concise form, too, contains in its entirety the fundamental essence of the practice of Chöd.

nesses as black smoke or black liquid which is offered to the *gdon* and *'dre* entities that cause illnesses (*nad bdag*). (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu)

Engage in this practice only when the conditions of time and place are suitable, and do not ever under any circumstances randomly or casually pronounce the deep and sacred sound PHAT, for as a Tibetan proverb says:

PHAT arouses sleeping spirits.

As has been explained here, practitioners should not remain anchored to the words of the practice but should rather seek as much as possible to adhere to the essential point or authentic principle of the practice itself. Engaging in this way is in harmony with the principle of the Dzogchen teaching and is also perfectly in harmony with the conditions of the current degenerate age. So, I believe it is extremely important always to practise the fundamental principle of Chöd congruent with the circumstances of time and place.

Machig Labdrön

7. THE PRINCIPLE OF YANTRA YOGA IN RELATION TO BEHAVIOUR

In the same way that butter contains the substance of milk, the ultimate essence of all the sutras and tantras transmitted by Buddha, including the method of Chöd that is closely linked with them, is undoubtedly comprised in the tantras, lungs and upadeshas of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo. An element that is indispensable in order to integrate this profound essence of the teaching in the three doors (body, voice and mind) of the practitioner in an authentic manner consists in the Yantra Yoga taught in the *Union of Sun and Moon*[312] text. It is particularly effective in enabling the experiences of the path actually to arise within oneself through behaviour. So it is necessary to learn correctly and to practise as much as possible the pranayama methods and movements as explained in the original text.

7.1. THE NINEFOLD ELIMINATION OF IMPURE AIR COMBINED WITH VISUALISATION

The Yantra Union of Sun and Moon says (op. 20, A: p. 1, 9; B: p. 29, 7):

⌘ In the position of Vairochana, expel the impure air. ⌘

Thus, first of all assume the position of Vairocana with seven characteristics[313] and exhale the impure air nine times. Inhaling, visualise slowly drawing in all the purity or substance of the five elements of the universe in the form of lights of five colours so as to strengthen the condition of the five elements of your own body. Exhaling the impure air, visualise instead that all the hindrances and negative deeds accu-

[312] The *yantra* system called Union of the Sun and Moon (*'Phrul 'khor nyi zla kha sbyor*), whose origin is ascribed to Mahāsiddha Humkāra and Padmasambhava, was transmitted in Tibet by the great translator Vairocana (VIII century) to his disciple g.Yu sgra snying po.

[313] See note 27.

mulated in past lives and all possible illnesses, provocations of energy and all negativity emerge in the form of black smoke and vanish into the natural condition of emptiness of the ultimate nature of phenomena.

This visualisation exercise is carried out not only at the beginning of a session of pranayama and movements of Yantra Yoga but is an extraordinary method to apply regularly before any session of practice.

7.2. The three series of physical training

After having correctly carried out the expulsion of the impure breath you should practise accurately the three groups of exercises that mainly pertain to physical training: the Tsigjong for loosening the joints; the Lungsang exercises to purify the prana; the Tsadul exercises to control the channels. These are indispensable as preliminaries for all yantras.

7.2.1. The loosening exercises for the joints

The root text says (op. 20, A: p.1, 10; B: p. 31, 10):

> ཞ As a preliminary practice of the physical training one sets in motion the limbs and the five sense doors. ཞ

There are five exercises to loosen the joints:
1. Contracting.
2. Shaking.
3. Pushing.
4. Flexing.
5. Rotating.[314]

Practising these movements, the limbs and joints that have difficulty in moving are loosened and made fit for the practice of the yantras. As a benefit, all the problems and illnesses related to the five sense organs, the head and the four limbs, the joints and the greater and lesser articulated joints, are eliminated as well as prevented.

[314] In Tibetan *sgrim pa, gsil ba, 'phul ba, 'bebs pa, bskor ba.*

7.2.2. The eight movements to purify prana

After having prepared the body for movement with the five loosening exercises for the joints, correctly carry out the eight movements for the purification of the prana which are linked respectively to eight different types of breathing:

1. Slow inhalation.
2. Open hold.
3. Pressure.
4. Rapid exhalation.
5. Rapid inhalation.
6. Closed hold.
7. Contraction.
8. Slow exhalation.[315]

It is necessary to engage in correctly practising these eight yantras to purify the prana until the achievement of perfect mastery of the essential points of each of these eight exercises, in order to be able subsequently to practise any kind of pranayama correctly.

7.2.3. The five exercises to control the channels

From the same text (op. 20, A: p. 2, 14; B: p. 59, 9):

> ⌘ In order to control the channels, straighten the back: through the right nostril exhale the air roughly, through the left nostril inhale slowly and gently, (then) hold the neutral (air) until it pervades the whole body.[316] ⌘

[315] In Tibetan *'jug pa, dgang pa, gzhil ba, 'phen ba, rngub pa, skyil ba, 'dren pa, 'byin pa.* Open retention (*dgang ba*) means remaining filled with air after having inhaled. Pressure (*gzhil ba*) involves a muscular movement by means of which the force of the air is pushed in a direction. Closed retention (*skyil ba*) is the result of having pushed the force of the air downwards, counterbalanced by light pressure of the sphincter upwards. Contraction (*'dren pa*) requires contracting the abdominal muscles towards the spine.

[316] These two ways of breathing are called rough breathing or air (*rtsub rlung*) and gentle breathing or air (*'jam rlung*). Rough breathing means inhaling and exhaling

This describes the method of breathing for controlling the channels, which is followed by five types of movement:

1. Massaging.
2. Stretching the ankles.
3. Rotating the arms.
4. Closing the armpits.
5. Stretching.[317]

Practising these five yantras correctly, disturbances related to the channels and the prana are eliminated, enabling one to engage in the profound Tsalung[318] methods, and various other benefits are obtained. So it is important to practise these exercises until you obtain an actual result.

7.3. The five fundamental pranayamas

In the *Union of Sun and Moon* text, five extraordinary pranayamas are explained as fundamental methods of breathing:

1. The pranayama of the four characteristic conditions[319]
2. The pranayama of the four applications[320]

rapidly and indirectly. Gentle breathing means inhaling and exhaling slowly and directly. Neutral air (*ma ning rlung*) means the condition of *prāṇa* in which the forces of the solar and lunar aspects are balanced.

[317] In Tibetan *mnye ba, long shad, dpung skor, mchan 'bebs, myong ba.*

[318] The expression *rtsa rlung*, literally 'channels and *prāṇa*', denotes all the yogic practices pertaining to control of the channels, the *prāṇa* and the seed-essence or *thig le.*

[319] In Tibetan *de nyid rnam bzhi'i rlung sbyor*: a *prāṇayama* method which mainly involves training in the four phases of open retention (*dgang ba*), pressure (*gzhil ba*), closed retention (*skyil ba*) and contraction (*'dren pa*). (O.N.)

[320] In Tibetan *sbyor ba bzhi ldan gyi rlung sbyor*: a *prāṇayama* method to master *kumbhaka* through the four phases of inhalation (*'jug pa*), closed retention (*skyil ba*), rapid exhalation (*'phen pa*) and empty retention (*rtsa stong du 'khyil ba*). (O.N.) See Chapter II: 3.2.7.3.

3. The pranayama to make the secret prana enter the central channel[321]
4. The pranayama of the seven branches.[322]
5. The pranayama of the six applications[323]

In this regard the root text states (op. 20, A: p. 3, 9; B: p. 70, 6):

⌘ Since the root of Yantra is prana, engaging in the seven types (of breathing): open holding, pressure, closed holding, contrac-

[321] In Tibetan *gsang rlung dbu mar 'jug pa'i rlung sbyor.* From *Yantra Union of the Sun and Moon* (op. 20, A: p. 10, 4; B: p. 8, 9):

⌘ The method to capture the secret *prāṇa* in the central channel. The position is the lotus posture, with the hands gripping the sides with the thumbs pointing forwards and the chest stretched: (this is) the posture of Humchen Kara.

The method of concentration: one's body is a pure, clear dimension. At the centre of this inseparability of appearance and emptiness visualise the central channel having six characteristics, with a luminous blue HŪṂ at the navel. Expand the central channel together with the HŪṂ (so that) it reaches the size of the body, of the place, of the mountains and the sea, until it equals the whole universe: in this way the traces of karmic vision are purified in the ultimate dimension. Then diminish the central channel and the HŪṂ, reducing it to an ever smaller size. (Always) keeping concentrated on the HŪṂ, train in this way on expanding and reabsorbing.

The method of breathing: inhale the karmic *prāṇa* slowly and in a prolonged way through the lunar (*ro ma*) and solar (*rkyang ma*) channels. Capture it in the central channel with a small closed retention, draw in the sides and pull with the force of the HŪṂ. Sweetly emitting the vibration of the HŪṂ sound from the nostrils, lips and teeth, outer and inner karmic visions and all karmic traces are purified, and in clarity the whole universe (becomes) the HŪṂ. In this way perfecting in the inhalation, the closed retention and the expansion and reabsorption of the HŪṂ emitting (the sound), the karmic *prāṇa* will penetrate completely in the central channel and illusory vision will manifest as wisdom. ⌘ (O.N.)

[322] In Tibetan *yan lag bdun ldan gyi rlung sbyor*: a special *prāṇayama* method (also known as the gentle breathing method or *'jam rlung*) that contains the seven phases of: inhalation (*'jug pa*), open retention (*dgang ba*), pressure (*gzhil ba*), closed retention (*skyil ba*), contraction (*'dren pa*), rapid exhalation (*'phen pa*), empty retention (*rtsa stong du 'khyil ba*). (O.N.)

[323] In Tibetan *sbyor ba drug pa'i rlung sbyor*: a special *prāṇayama* method (also known as the rough breathing method or *rtsub rlung*) that utilises the six procedures of: rough inhalation (*rtsub rlung rngub pa*), pressure (*gzhil ba*), closed retention (*skyil ba*), contraction (*'dren pa*), rapid exhalation with HA (*has 'phen pa*), empty retention (*rtsa stong du 'khyil ba*). (O.N.)

tion, empty holding, gentle breathing and rough breathing, one practises the yantras of the five series. ꙮ

Thus we have five series of yantras each with five basic movements, linked respectively to the five fundamental types of holding the breath (i.e., open, with pressure, closed, with contraction, empty). Furthermore, to make progress and perfect the capacity of prana, there exist for every principal movement two subsidiary yantras (giving fifteen yantras in each series). After having learned them in a precise manner, you should choose as your regular practice the method of breathing that is most suited to your condition, and in the same way select from among the various series of yantras five positions corresponding to the five types of holding, bearing in mind your own capacities. So you should practise such a personalised daily session of Yantra. I am convinced that in this way you can realise the true aim of the practice of Tsalung and also have guaranteed a good condition of health and other extraordinary benefits.

7.4. The seven lotus postures

There are seven yantras known as 'the seven lotus positions':

1. The flaming lotus.
2. The arched lotus.
3. The twisted lotus.
4. The suspended lotus.
5. The swinging lotus.
6. The leaping lotus
7. The snaking lotus.[324]

Through practising them it is possible to realise the development of heat and of the sensation of pleasure and the other signs of Tsalung

[324] In Tibetan *pad ma 'bar ba, pad ma dgyed pa, pad ma 'khyil ba, pad ma lding ba, pad ma 'khril ba, pad ma 'bebs pa, pad ma 'khyugs pa.*

practice, to achieve control of the five elements, to activate[325] the channels, prana and seed-essence and to swiftly realise their power, together with many other benefits.

7.5. The way to conclude a Yantra session

It is necessary to conclude a session of practice of Yantra Yoga based on one of the five fundamental pranayamas with the movements of the Wave of the Vajra[326], with the aim of eliminating any possible defects (provoked by any mistakes in performance). However, as regards the true goal of all the pranayamas and yantras, the root text says (op. 20, A: p. 30, 6; B: p. 251, 8):

> ⌘ As the final method of the essence of the *Magical Manifestation*[327] one should apply the state of self-perfection of Dzogpa Chenpo. ⌘

This means that the practitioner must approach the profound meaning of the base, path and fruit of Dzogchen Ati and engage in it in the correct manner.

[325] In Tibetan *las su rung ba*, an expression that can also be rendered 'ripening in a perfect way' enabling them to perform perfectly their specific functions.
[326] In Tibetan *rdo rje'i rba rlabs*.
[327] In Tibetan *sgyu 'phrul*, see note 241.

Vairochana

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE REALISATION OF THE FRUIT

The Garland of Views (op. 21, A: p. 172, 5; B: p. 25, 2) says:

> ⌘ So (through) this method, that represents the true sense of the final goal of Total Perfection, one spontaneously enters the level of the Great Accumulation of the Chakra of Letters. Those with supreme capacity of understanding recognise from the beginning the state of original enlightenment and become familiar with it directly[328]. However this is not possible for ordinary people. ⌘

"The true sense of the final goal of Total Perfection" at the beginning of the quotation should be understood to mean the final goal of all the paths, from the path of the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas to the path of Ati.

1. THE LEVEL OF ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS VEHICLE

The Hinayana vehicle of the Shravakas deems it necessary to traverse the four levels called: one who has entered the stream, once-returner, non-returner, Arhat[329].

The Hinayana vehicle of the Pratyekabuddhas deems it necessary also to progress through their own various specific levels of realisation.

In the Mahayana, after having traversed the five paths of accumulation, application, vision, meditation and no more learning and after having traversed one after the other the ten levels of realisation or bhumis mentioned above, one finally attains the true bhumi of final enlightenment. In fact Rongzompa's commentary says (op. 31: p. 262, 6):

[328] In some editions *goms pa drag rdal tu 'gro ba*, become familiar directly, reads *gom pa drag rdal tu 'gro ba*, traverse directly.

[329] See note 117.

⌘ In general the diverse traditions list diverse levels of enlightenment. In the Philosophical Characteristics Vehicle the bhumi of enlightenment is usually called Total Light. The name derives from the fact that, thanks to the radiation of many rays of light (from the dimension of enlightenment) beings become suitable (to receive wisdom). ⌘

2. THE THREE BHUMIS OF ENLIGHTENMENT ACCORDING TO VAJRAYANA

Rongzompa's commentary says (op. 31: p. 262, 20):

⌘ In Vajrayana generally there are deemed to be three bhumis of enlightenement: the bhumi of Total Light, the Lotus-endowed bhumi, the bhumi of the Great Accumulation of the Chakra of Letters.
(The) Total Light (level is so called) because the dharmakaya free of characteristic attributes, being by its very nature luminous clarity, is all pervading.
(The) Lotus-endowed (level is so called) because, even though with concept-free prajña there is nothing to perceive in relation to dharmakaya this condition itself is the base of the potentiality of the (compassionate) energy free of attachment.
(The) Great Accumulation of the Chakra of Letters (level is so called because) in that moment one effortlessly realises the self-perfected state of wisdom and of the mandala with characteristic attributes[330]. The letters (in fact) are of two types: of wisdom and of the characteristic attributes[331]. The (letters of the) characteristic attributes are in their turn subdivided in two types: of names and of forms. The forms too are of two types: those that are complete and those that appear partially.

[330] In Tibetan *mtshan ma'i dkyil 'khor*, the manifestation of the *maṇḍala* with all its characteristic symbolic attributes.
[331] In Tibetan *ye shes dang mtshan ma*. 'Letters of wisdom' indicates the manifestation of the letters within a pure dimension.

This great accumulation of the mandala of existence, that manifests self-perfected as the fruit, is called 'the bhumi of the great accumulation of the chakra of letters' and also the thirteenth bhumi of enlightenment.
The tantra called *The Ornament of the Essence of the Vajra* (*rDo rje snying po rgyan gyi rgyud*) speaks of twelve levels of enlightenment, explained in this way: two (linked respectively) with method and prajña, five (linked with the five) kayas[332] and (five more linked with) the five wisdoms, twelve in total. Furthermore the same text asserts:

The supreme bhumi is that of the Vidyadhara.

And:

The supreme bhumi is (that of) method and prajña.

In other texts it is called 'the bhumi of Vajradhara' or 'the indivisible bhumi of Samantabhadra', 'the bhumi of supreme wisdom' etc.[333], however these always refer to the same principle, and the use of different names is due to the different kinds of qualities being underlined. ⌘

[332] The five *kāyas* or dimensions (*sku lnga*) are: *dharmakāya* (*chos sku*), *saṃbhogakāya* (*longs sku*), *nirmāṇakāya* (*sprul sku*), plus the *kāya* of the essential nature or *svabhāvikakāya* (*ngo bo nyid sku*) and the indestructible *kāya* or *vajrakāya* (*rdo rje'i sku*). (O.N.) The *svabhāvikakāya* is related primarily to the basic condition of all the other *kāyas* while the *vajrakāya* refers mainly to their natural qualities. (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu)

[333] In Tibetan *rdo rje 'dzin gyi sa, kun tu bzang po dbye ba med pa'i sa, ye shes bla ma'i sa*, respectively.

3. THE REAL MEANING OF THE GREAT ACCUMULATION OF THE CHAKRA OF LETTERS

The commentary *Light of the Sun* by Jamgön Kongtrul says (op. 11: p. 348, 5):

> ⌘ In his commentary, Rongzompa explains the subdivision of the letters in two types, of wisdom and of characteristic attributes, while (Longchenpa's) *Elimination of Darkness in the Ten Directions (Phyogs bcu mun sel)* explains that the letters, spreading like clouds, manifest as a 'great accumulation of letters' that take on the form of letters miraculously emanated (on the one hand) and of letters that (verbally) communicate the teaching (on the other)[334].
> Furthermore, *Tsangtig (gTsang tik)* explains:
>
> As regards the 'letters', all phenomena exist only inasmuch as they are designated by the letters of names and words and apart from this they are by nature devoid of existence. However, simultaneous with this absence (of actuality) everything that appears is (the manifestation of) the chakra of the basic dimensions and of the wisdom that exists from the beginning as the great self-perfected accumulation of merit and wisdom.
>
> In any case, the (Sanskrit corresponding to) the word 'letter', that is akshara, can also mean 'unchanging'[335]. In fact, the (famous verse of the) *Manjushrinamasangiti* that states "the supreme utterly pure letter" is rendered in a quotation found in the commentary (to *Kalachakra* called) *Stainless Light (Dri med 'od)* "the supreme unchanging utterly pure (state)". From this one

[334] In Tibetan *sprul pa cho 'phrul gyi yi ge* and *chos ston pa brda'i yi ge*. The former, for example, manifest as seed syllables, *mantra* and so on, while the latter communicate at the verbal level.

[335] The Sanskrit term *akṣara*, that means 'unchanging', is also used as a synonym of 'letter' inasmuch as the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, divided in vocals (*āli*) and consonants (*kāli*) represent the origin of the whole of existence.

can deduce that (the name of the thirteenth bhumi) could also be interpreted as 'great accumulation of the chakra of the mandala that knows no changes or transformations'. ꕥ

As we have read, translating the term akshara as 'letters' gives rise to diverse interpretations of its meanings, among which 'letters of wisdom and of characteristic attributes' or 'manifestation of the clouds of letters' They can be explained in the sense of the manifestation of sounds, light and rays as the expression of the potentiality of energy of the primordial state in the form of letters, and from this viewpoint no contradiction arises. However the interpretation based on the term akshara meaning 'unchanging' seems to me to correspond more closely to the true meaning.

Jamgön Kongtrul

CHAPTER NINE

THE CONCLUSION OF THE BASE OF SANTI MAHA SANGHA

1. THE ADVICE TO KEEP DZOGPA CHENPO SECRET

The Garland of Views (op. 21, A: p. 172, 6; B: p. 25, 3) says:

⌘ If ordinary persons listen (to these teachings), however much they may reflect on them they will not believe in their truth and profoundness. Having an ordinary mind that has difficulty in understanding and achieving certainty they will not recognise the truth and profoundness (of these teachings), but instead on the basis of their own (limited) experience they will judge everything according to their own (viewpoint). Consequently as it may happen that, through their conviction that (the teaching) is falsehood they may conceive the idea of reviling or persecuting the supreme teachers, (the teachings) are kept strictly secret. It is for this reason that the name 'secret vehicle' is used. ⌘

This clearly explains the reason for secrecy. Furthermore, from the phrase "however much they may reflect on them" we can clearly deduce that the profound state of knowledge of Dzogchen completely transcends the judgement of the ordinary mind and that, being inconceivable by people of lower intelligence, it is by its own nature 'totally secret'

2. THE INITIAL AND FINAL PHASES OF A PRACTICE SESSION

Those wishing to follow the teaching of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo should first of all make themselves suitable to practise whichever of the prac-

tices belonging to the base of the path in which they want to engage by means of the exercise of the nine exhalations of impure breath. Then, in order to purify their own condition completely they should practise the visualisation and mantra of purification of the five elements[336] as taught in *The Formula of Purification of the Ocean (rGya mtsho khrus kyi lung)*[337], a preliminary practice method used by the teachers of the Vajra Bridge lineage of Dzogchen Longde[338]. At this point, before embarking on the main practice they should engage correctly in the Refuge and Bodhichitta. Then they should practise the main phase of contemplation (or visualisation) in accord with their chosen practice and finally dedicate the merit and virtues for the benefit of all beings with the following verses (in conclusion of a practice of one of the three roots):

[336] The *mantra* of purification of the five elements:
OṂ E HO SHUDDHE SHUDDHE
YAM HO SHUDDHE SHUDDHE
BAM HO SHUDDHE SHUDDHE
RAM HO SHUDDHE SHUDDHE
LAM HO SHUDDHE SHUDDHE
E YAM BAM RAM LAM
SHUDDHE SHODHANAYE SVĀHĀ
Although there are various versions of this *mantra* the one above was orally transmitted to me by the rainbow body rDzogs chen space *yogin* O rgyan bsTan 'dzin. (O.N.)

[337] From the Klong sde *Preliminary Practices* (*sNgon 'gro'i chos spyod*) (op. 8: p. 90, 1):

> ⌘ To purify impurities the *rGya mtsho khrus kyi lung* contains the 'formula (*lung*) of the ocean' of the abode and the 'formula of the ocean' of what is found therein. Regarding the formula of the ocean of the abode, wherever the body is there are channels, wherever the channels are there is *prāṇa*, wherever *prāṇa* is there is blood; this is the formula of the ocean of the abode. The formula of the ocean of what is found therein is one's own urine. ⌘

And (op. 8: p. 91, 5):

> ⌘ Then recite this *mantra*:
> OṂ E HO SHUDDHE SHUDDHE
> BAM HO SHUDDHE SHUDDHE
> RAM HO SHUDDHE SHUDDHE
> A BAM RAM SHUDDHE SHUDDHE
> BI RAM SHUDDHE SHUDDHE A A SVĀHĀ. ⌘ (O.N.)

[338] The Vajra Bridge (*rdo rje zam pa*) denominates the system of practice of the Four Indications (*brda bzhi*) characteristic of rDzogs chen Klong sde.

With these virtues may I swiftly
Realise the deities of the three roots
And guide all beings onto the level of realisation,
Without anyone remaining excluded!

Otherwise it is appropriate to recite the following verses by Nagarjuna, that can also be employed at the end of a session of teaching:

With these virtues may all beings,
Completing the accumulation of merit and of wisdom,
Attain the two sacred dimensions
Which derive from merit and wisdom.

This is the way one should perform the dedication together with the invocation and immediately afterwards express the wish that the precious Dzogchen teaching might spread in all the dimensions of beings, reciting the verses by Padmasambhava:

Like the sun rising in the sky,
May the peerless Dzogchen teaching,
Secret treasure of all the Enlightened Ones,
Spread everywhere.

In this way one should always apply the 'three sacred fundamentals' of virtue to the three phases of a session of practice, that is to say:

1. Refuge and Bodhichitta, as the virtue of the starting phase.
2. Contemplation beyond concepts, as the virtue of the central phase.
3. The dedication of merit and the invocation, as the virtue of the concluding phase.

Also, it is necessary to engage with diligence in order to enable the authentic sense of the practice to arise within and to be able to have the specific experiences of each of the practices in which we engage.

The dedication of merit and the invocation, that constitute the virtue of the concluding phase, are based on the meaning and not on the words, thus they depend mainly on the practitioners' intention, so even

if we do not recite so many words the fundamental thing is to have pure, altruistic determination, and on this basis to dedicate the virtues for the benefit of others, formulating the wish that through such virtues all beings may always be happy and free of suffering and may finally completely release themselves in the dimension of the state of Samantabhadra.

Furthermore, in order to make the actualisation of the aspirations expressed by an ordinary practitioner in the verses of dedication and invocation more concrete, it is necessary to use the power of profound secret mantras. So after having recited the verses of dedication and of invocation one should pronounce the following mantra:

OM DHARE DHARE BHANDARE SVĀHĀ

together with the seal-mantra of the base, path and fruit of Dzogchen:

JAYA JAYA SIDDHI SIDDHI PHALA PHALA

and the seal-mantra of the six dimensions of Samantabhadra[339]:

'A A HA SHA SA MA

and the seal-mantra to reverse and evacuate transmigration in the six worlds:

MAMA KOLING SAMANTA

Empowering the practice with the power of these last three mantras is a very efficacious means traditionally used by the great teachers of the past.

[339] In Tibetan *kun tu bzang po klong drug*: the pure state of the dimensions of the six *lokas*.

3. CONCLUSION OF THE BASE OF SANTI MAHA SANGHA

Thus male and female practitioners, on the basis of the particular instructions received concerning the profound path, should engage in the practices as much as possible according to their own capacity. On the basis of the particular conditions of time and place and other factors they should succeed in integrating the practices of the base into their own condition. By this means they should succeed in actually realising the specific experiences that constitute the signs of the path. This is an indispensable condition in order to be able to engage in the Ati Dzogpa Chenpo teaching, and for this reason it is called:

"the base of the sacred teaching"

4. THE DEDICATION OF MERIT AND THE FINAL INVOCATION

This precious key to the way of liberation
I give to all those that are on the way:
Open the great door of Ati
And invite all beings as guests!

That which I have collected here surely cannot represent
All the vast teachings to be learnt,
Just as a single bunch of flowers cannot represent
All the various flowers that grow in summer.

But just as a spark together with secondary causes
Can kindle a whole mountain,
It is also possible that the power of my good intentions
May advance the glory of the teaching and of beings.

So this perfect precious vase,
That collects the drops of nectar
Of the teachings of the supreme teachers
Has been prepared by me, Longchen Rolpai Dorje.

By the small light of my pure intention
May the lotus of wisdom in those on the path flourish,
So that the continuous flow of nectar of provisional benefits and of the definitive benefit
Might fulfill the wishes of all beings!

Thanks to these benefits may the Ati Dzogchen teaching
Spread and unfold to the end of the world
For the glory and happiness of all beings,
And may all self-liberate in the state of Samantabhadra!

For the benefit of practitioners of the Dzogchen Community who have faith in me and who wish to follow my teaching, the bhusuku[340] called Chogyal Namkhai Norbu or Longchen Rolpai Dorje has collected in this book the essential teachings of the supreme teachers and finished writing it on the seventeenth day of the twelfth month, under the Gyal constellation, of the metal-female-sheep year (17th February 1992) in the small retreat house Wödsal Ling at Merigar, the centre of the Dzogchen Community at the foot of Mount Amiata, in central Italy. Virtue and good luck![341]

***

I hope that this wish-fulfilling vase
May satisfy the hopes of people who are interested,
So that by increasing their own and others' happiness
A new perfect age might arise!

May the power of this virtuous action
Cause the teaching to spread in all places
Eliminating degradations from all worlds,
So that happiness may be enjoyed forever!

[340] A term which, approximately, indicates an idler, someone who does nothing but eat, sleep and loaf about.

[341] These are the dedication and colophon appearing at the end of the original edition of *Rin chen bum bzang*, here followed by the dedication and colophon of the first edition of *'Dod 'jo'i bum bzang*.

May the holders of the teaching of Santi Maha Sangha
Spread like the rays of the sun
And eliminate the darkness from the minds of beings,
So that all may realise the state of Samantabhadra!

I, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, finished writing this book on the morning of the first day of the first month of the water-monkey year, Tibetan New Year's day (5th March 1992).

Subsequently, as I noticed the need to add further explanations and wished to rearrange the order of certain sections I revised the whole text at Namgyalgar, the centre of the Dzogchen Community in Australia, on the fifth day of the first month of the fire-mouse year (23rd February 1996).

Good luck! Virtue!

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SANTI MAHA SANGHA RMANG GZHI'I KHRID RIN CHEN BUM BZANG ZHES BYA BA

SANTI MAHA SANGHA RMANG GZHI'I SBYOR BA'I SKOR
Le'u dang po: 'JIG RTEN DANG 'JIG RTEN LAS 'DAS PA'I LTA BA
1. 'jig rten las 'das ma 'das kyi lta ba'i khyad
2. 'jig rten pa'i lta ba'i gtso bo
2.1. phyal pa'i lta ba
2.2. rgyang 'phen pa'i lta ba
2.3. mur thug pa'i lta ba
2.4. mu stegs pa'i lta ba
2.4.1.rgyu med la 'bras bu yod par lta ba'i lugs
2.4.2. rgyu 'bras log par lta ba'i lugs
2.4.3. rgyu yod la 'bras bu med par lta ba'i lugs
3. 'jig rten las 'das pa'i lta ba

Le'u gnyis pa: 'JIG RTEN LAS 'DAS PA'I BSTAN SGOR 'JUG TSHUL
1. lam gyi gzhi rten bslab pa gsum bsrung ba
2. sna tshogs thos bsam phyogs med du bya ba
3. sgo gsum zhi zhing rang rgyud gdul ba
3.1. yongs su grags kyi blo ldog rnam pa bzhi
3.1.1. dal 'byor gyi mi lus
3.1.2. mi rtag pa
3.1.3. las
3.1.4. 'khor ba'i nyes dmigs
3.2. khyad par can gyi blo sbyong rnam pa bdun
3.2.1. 'dus byas thams cad mi rtag par bsam nas blo sbyong ba
3.2.2. byas pa thams cad sdug bsngal gyi rgyur bsam nas blo sbyong ba
3.2.3. rkyen sna tshogs pas 'khrul pa la bsam nas blo sbyong ba
3.2.4. 'di snang gi bya ba la don med par bsam nas blo sbyong ba
3.2.5. thar pa dam pa'i 'bras bu la bsam nas blo syong ba
3.2.6. bla ma'i gdams ngag la brten nas blo sbyong ba
3.2.7. rnam par mi rtog pa'i bsam gtan la brten nas blo sbyong ba
3.2.7.1. bde stong mi rtog pa la blo sbyong ba
3.2.7.2. gsal stong mi rtog pa la blo sbyong ba
3.2.7.3. chos nyid rnam par mi rtog pa la blo sbyong ba

4. sdig la 'dzem zhing dge ba spel ba: tshul khrims kyi bslab pa'i skor
4.1. sdig pa'i dgongs don
4.2. sdig pa mi dge ba bcu
4.3. sdig pa'i las gsog tshul
4.4. sdig las kyi bye brag rnam pa gnyis
4.5. mtshams med pa lnga
4.6. de dang nye ba lnga
4.7. lci ba bzhi
4.8. log pa brgyad
4.9. sdig pa'i las kyi 'bras bu'i bye brag
4.10. dge ba'i las ji ltar spel dgos pa
4.11. dge 'bras kyi bye brag

5. ngo tsha khrel yod dad pa bskyed pa
5.1. ngo tsha dang khrel yod pa
5.2. dad pa bskyed dgos pa
5.3. dad pa'i bye brag mi 'dra ba'i rnam grangs

6. dge ba'i bshes dang dge grogs bsten pa
6.1. bla ma dge ba'i bshes gnyen gyi rim pa
6.2. thog mar bla ma brtag la mkhas pa
6.2.1. bsten 'os kyi bla ma'i mtshan nyid
6.2.2. bsten mi 'os pa'i bla ma'i mtshan nyid
6.2.3. slob mar bzung 'os min gyi mtshan nyid
6.3. bar du bla ma bsten la mkhas pa
6.4. tha ma dgongs spyod 'tshol la mkhas pa
6.5. dge ba'i grogs la bsten dgos don
6.6. sdig pa'i grogs po spang dgos don
6.7. sdig pa'i grogs spangs pa'i yon tan

Le'u gsum pa: BSLAB PA'I GZHI RTEN SKYABS SU 'GRO BA
1. skybas su 'gro ba'i dgongs don
2. skyabs 'gro'i sdom pa dang bslab pa
2.1. theg pa chung ngu'i lugs kyi skyabs sdom
2.2. theg pa chen po'i lugs kyi skyabs 'gro'i bslab pa
2.3. sngags sgyur lam lugs kyi skyabs 'gro
2.4. a ti rang grol lugs kyi skyabs 'gro
3. skyabs su 'gro ba'i tshul nges pa
3.1. phyi'i skyabs 'gro

3.2. nang gi skyabs 'gro
3.3. gsang ba'i skyabs 'gro
4. skyabs 'gro rang nyams su len tshul

Le'u bzhi pa: BYANG CHUB MCHOG TU SEMS BSKYED PA
1. byang chub mchog tu sems bskyed stangs gsum
2. byang chub mchog tu sems bskyed tshul rnam pa gnyis
3. byang chub kyi sems rnam pa gnyis
4. kun rdzob byang chub kyi sems bskyed tshul
4.1. kun rdzob sems bskyed rang gis len tshul
4.2. rang dga' bsgom pa
4.3. gshan dga' bsgom du gzhug pa
4.4. kun rdzob sems bskyed kyi snying don nyams su len tshul
5. smon pa sems bskyed kyi bslab bya: tshad med rnam pa bzhi
5.1. btang snyoms tshad med
5.2. byams pa tshad med
5.3. snying rje tshad med
5.4. dga' ba tshad med
5.5. tshad med rnam bzhis blo sbyomg tshul
6. 'jug pa sems bskyed kyi bslab bya: pha rol tu phyin pa drug
6.1. sbyin pa'i phar phyin la bslab pa
6.1.1. zang zing gi sbyin pa
6.1.2. chos kyi sbyin pa
6.1.3. mi 'jigs pa skyabs kyi sbyin pa
6.1.4. sbyin pa'i snying don nyams su len thabs
6.2. tshul khrims kyi phar phyin la bslab pa
6.2.1. nyes spyod sdom pa'i tshul khrims
6.2.2. dge ba chos sdud kyi tshul khrims
6.2.3. sems can don byed kyi tshul khrims
6.2.4. tshul khrims kyi snying don nyams su len thabs
6.3. bzod pa'i phar phyin la bslab pa
6.3.1. log sgrub bzod pa'i bzod pa
6.3.2. chos phyir dka' thub bzod pa'i bzod pa
6.3.3. zab mo'i don la mi skrag pa'i bzod pa
6.3.4. bzod pa'i snying don nyams su len thabs
6.4. brtson 'grus kyi phar phyin la bslab pa
6.4.1. go cha'i brtson 'grus
6.4.2. sbyor ba'i brtson 'grus
6.4.3. chog par mi 'dzin pa'i brtson 'grus
6.4.4. brtson 'grus kyi snying don nyams su len thabs

6.5. bsam gtan gyi phar phyin la bslab pa: ting nge 'dzin gyi bslab pa'i skor
6.5.1. byis pa nyer spyod kyi bsam gtan
6.5.2. don rab 'byed pa'i bsam gtan
6.5.3. de bzhin gshegs dge'i bsam gtan
6.5.3.1. bsam gtan lam slong gyi cha lag rnam pa gsum
6.5.3.1.1. bdag gzhan mnyam pa
6.5.3.1.2. bdag gzhan brje ba
6.5.3.1.3. bdag las gzhan gces pa
6.6. shes rab kyi phar phyin la bslab pa: shes rab kyi bslab pa'i skor
6.6.1. thos pa'i shes rab
6.6.2. bsam pa'i shes rab
6.6.3. sgom pa'i shes rab
6.6.4. bden pa rnam pa gnyis
6.6.5. gang zag gi bdag med
6.6.6. chos kyi bdag med: dran pa nyer bzhag rnam pa bzhi
6.6.6.1. lus dran pa nye bar bzhag pa
6.6.6.2. tshor ba dran pa nye bar bzhag pa
6.6.6.3. sems dran pa nye bar bzhag pa
6.6.6.4. chos dran pa nye bar bzhag pa

LAM GYI CHOS RNAM PA GSUM
Le'u lnga pa: LTA BA GTAN LA 'BEBS TSHUL GYI SKOR
1. mtshan nyid theg pa'i yin tshul rnam pa gsum
1.1. nyan thos kyi theg pa'i lta ba'i snying don
1.2. rang rgyal gyi theg pa'i lta ba'i snying don
1.3. byang chub sems dpa'i theg pa'i lta ba'i snying don
1.4. theg pa che chung gi brda khyad kyi go don rnal ma

2. gsang sngags kyi theg pa'i skor
2.1. mdo sngags kyi khyad ji ltar yod pa
2.2. rgyud kyi dgongs don
2.3. rgyud sde'i rnam dbye
2.4. rgyud sde'i dbye ba mang du byung ba'i rgyu mtshan
2.5. phyi pa'i rgyud sde rnam pa gsum
2.5.1. kriya 'am bya ba'i rgyud kyi lta ba'i snying don
2.5.2. ubhaya 'am spyod pa'i rgyud kyi lta ba'i snying don
2.5.3. yoga 'am rnal 'byor rgyud kyi lta ba'i snying don
2.6. rnal 'byor bla med kyi rgyud sde
2.7. phyi 'gyur gsar ma ba'i lugs
2.7.1. rgyud kyi ngo bo rnam pa gsum

2.7.2. rgyud kyi rang bzhin rnam pa gsum
2.8. gsang sngags snga 'gyur rnying ma ba'i lugs
2.8.1. theg pa'i bye brag rim pa dgu
2.8.2. nang rgyud yoga sde gsum
2.8.3. mahayoga'i tantra chen po sde bco brgyad
2.8.4. sngags gsar snying gi gzhi rtsa'i khyad/ mahayoga dang anuyoga'i gzhi rtsa'i khyad
2.8.5. nang rgyud sde gsum gyi smin byed kyi dbang
2.8.5.1. dbang gi dgongs don mthar thug pa
2.8.6. mahayoga'i lta dgongs kyi snying don
2.8.7. anuyoga'i lta dgongs kyi snying don
2.8.8. atiyoga'i lta dgongs kyi snying don
2.8.9. ati rdzogs chen gyi 'jug sgo
2.8.9.1. rtogs pa rnam pa bzhi
2.8.9.2. mtshan nyid rnam pa gsum
2.8.9.3. dgos 'brel rnam pa gsum
2.8.9.4. bsnyen sgrub yan lag rnam pa bzhi
2.8.10. nang rgyud sde gsum gyi mthar thug ati yin pa'i tshul
2.8.11. ati'i dgongs pa gol sgrib las 'das pa'i tshul
2.8.12. rdzogs chen zhang zhung snyan brgyud kyi snying don

Le'u drug pa: SGOM PAS NYAMS SU LEN PA'I SKOR
1. theg pa chung ngu'i lam gnad nyams su len du dril tshul
2. theg pa chen po'i lam gnad nyams su len du dril tshul
3. phyi pa'i rgyud kyi snying don nyams su len tshul
4. mahayoga'i snying don nyams su len tshul
4.1. mahayoga'i dgongs 'dus bla ma'i rnal 'byor
4.1.1. bla ma'i rnal 'byor gsal 'debs tshul
4.1.2. bla ma'i rnal 'byor gyi dbang len tshul
4.1.3. dzab bsnyen gyis thugs rgyud bskul tshul
4.1.4. thugs yid gnyis med du bsre tshul
4.1.5. bla ma'i rnal 'byor ting 'dzin gyi klong du la bzla tshul
5. anuyoga'i snying don nyams su len tshul
5.1. ting 'dzin lha'i dal gsal 'debs tshul
5.2. ting 'dzin dzab kyi bzlas pa ji ltar bya tshul
6. atiyoga'i snying don nyams su len tshul
6.1. 'khor 'das ru shan 'byed pa'i dgongs don
6.1.1. phyi 'khor 'das ru shan 'byed tshul
6.1.2. nang 'khor 'das ru shan 'byed tshul
6.1.3. gsang ba 'khor 'das ru shan 'byed tshul

6.1.3.1. lus 'khor 'das ru shan dbye ba
6.1.3.2. ngag 'khor 'das ru shan dbye ba
6.1.3.3. yid 'khor 'das ru shan dbye ba
6.2. sems 'dzin gyi rim pa
6.2.1. rtsa ba'i sems 'dzin rnam pa bdun
6.2.1.1. mtshan ma a dkar la sems 'dzin pa
6.2.1.2. yi ge phat la sems 'dzin pa
6.2.1.3. khro bo dgyes pa'i gad mo la sems 'dzin pa
6.2.1.4. lha ma yin rtsod 'gyed la sems 'dzin pa
6.2.1.5. yi ge ram la sems 'dzin pa
6.2.1.6. rnam rtog hum gis 'ded pa la sems 'dzin pa
6.2.1.7. rdo rje'i glu la sems 'dzin pa

Le'u bdun pa: SPYOD PA JI LTAR SPYAD PAR BYA BA'I SKOR
1. dka' thub dang brtul zhugs
2. 'jig rten gyi dka' thub
3. 'jig rten las 'das pa'i dka' thub
3.1. nyan thos kyi dka' thub
3.2. byang chub sems dpa'i dka' thub
3.3. bla na med pa'i dka' thub
4. spyod tshad kun bzang gi spyod par dril dgos pa
5. ati kun bzang gi spyod tshul
6. spyod phyogs rdzogs 'brel gyi dgongs don/dam chos bdud gcod
6.1. dam chos bdud gcod kyi dgongs pa'i snying don/ bdud rnam pa bzhi
6.1.1. thogs bcas kyi bdud
6.1.2. thogs med kyi bdud
6.1.3. dga' brod kyi bdud
6.1.4. snyems byed kyi bdud
6.2. gcod kyi gdams pa rang nyams su leng tshul
7. spyod phyogs rnal 'byor 'phrul gyi dgongs don
7.1. sbyor ba rlung ro dgu phrugs kyi dmigs rim
7.2. lus sbyong gi bye brag rnam pa gsum
7.2.1. tshigs sbyong gi bye brag rnam pa lnga
7.2.2. rlung bsang gi bye brag rnam pa brgyad
7.2.3. rtsa 'dul gyi bye brag rnam pa lnga
7.3. rnal 'byor rtsa ba'i rlung sbyor rnam pa lnga
7.4. padma'i rgya rnam pa bdun
7.5. 'phrul skor gyi mjug sdud

Le'u brgyad pa: 'BRAS BU MNGON DU BYED PA'I SKOR
1. mtshan nyid theg pa'i rang 'bras sangs rgyas kyi sa
2. rdo rje theg pa'i sangs rgyas kyi sa gsum
3. yi ge 'khor lo tshogs chen gyi dgongs don rnal ma

Le'u dgu pa: SANTI MAHA SANGHA'I RJES KYI SKOR
1. rdzogs pa chen po gsang bar gdams pa
2. sbyor rjes dam pa'i tshul spyod kyi rim pa
3. santi maha sangha'i rmang gzhi'i mjug byang
4. bsngo smon

APPENDIX

THE PRACTICES OF THE BASE OF SANTI MAHA SANGHA

These are the instructions for the practice sessions of the Base Level of Santi Maha Sangha.

(One day of practice corresponds to four thuns. If you cannot do long retreats, you can do the required number of thuns in a longer time according to your own possibilities.)

LOJONG: THE SEVEN SPECIAL MIND TRAININGS

1. Training the mind in the thought that everything compounded is impermanent.
2. Training the mind in the thought that all actions are the cause of suffering.
3. Training the mind in the thought of how we are beguiled by diverse secondary causes.
4. Training the mind in the thought that all the actions of this life are meaningless.
5. Training the mind by reflecting on the fruit of supreme liberation.
6. Training the mind by reflecting on the value of the teachings of one's teacher.

   You should dedicate five, three, or at least one day of practice to each of these trainings, concentrating your mind with diligence. (Total minimum of 6 days.)

7. Training the mind by means of meditative stability in the state beyond thought:

   7.1. Training in the state beyond thought by means of pleasure and emptiness: you should engage diligently in this practice, devoting three, two or at least one week to it. (Total minimum of 7 days.)

   7.2. Training in the state beyond thought by means of clarity and emptiness: you should engage diligently in this practice, devoting three, two or at least one week to it. (Total minimum of 7 days.)

7.3. Training in the ultimate nature of phenomena completely beyond thought: in order actually to get the experience of parlung, on the basis of the instructions contained in the text you should stabilise major kumbakha, if possible; otherwise, medium kumbakha; or, at least, minor kumbakha, engaging with diligence so as to reach a level at which you do not feel any effort in holding the breath for the amount of time indicated.

THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES

1. Immeasurable equanimity.
2. Immeasurable loving kindness.
3. Immeasurable compassion.
4. Immeasurable joy.

You should devote five, three or at least one day to each of these practices, concentrating your mind with diligence. (Total minimum of 4 days.)

THE THREE SECONDARY PRACTICES FOR THE SAMTEN

1. The equality of oneself and others.
2. Exchanging oneself and others.
3. Cherishing others more than oneself.

One should engage diligently in these practices, devoting five, three or at least one day to each of them. (Total minimum of 3 days.)

THE TWO ABSENCES OF SELF-NATURE

1. Absence of self-nature in the person.
   One should engage diligently in this practice, devoting five, three or at least one day to it. (Total minimum of 1 day.)

2. Absence of self-nature in phenomena.
   Trenpa Nyershag: the four applications of presence
   2.1. Presence applied to observation of the body.
   2.2. Presence applied to observation of sensations.
   2.3. Presence applied to observation of the mind.
   2.4. Presence applied to observation of phenomena.

You should devote five, three or at least one day to each of these four subdivisions, engaging your mind with diligence. (Total minimum of 4 days.)

THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION AND MANTRAS OF THE THREE ROOTS

You should engage in the Anuyoga practice of the Three Roots - of Guru (Padma Thötrengtsal), Deva (Guru Tragpo or Guru Tragpur) and Dakini (Simhamukha) - with presence of a clear visualisation and connecting the concentration with recitation of the mantra, doing seven hundred thousand, five hundred thousand or at least three hundred thousand recitations of each.

KHORDE RUSHEN: SEPARATING SAMSARA AND NIRVANA

1. Outer Rushen: when you have the opportunity, you should devote seven, five or at least three days to the outer separation and relaxation in the natural condition.(Total minimum of 3 days.)
2. Inner Rushen: engaging yourself with diligence, you should devote seven, five or at least three days to each of the seven phases of the inner separation, consisting in the purification of the seeds of the six lokas, one at a time and then altogether, and relaxation in the natural condition. (Total minimum of 21 days.)
3. Secret Rushen: the separation of the three doors.
   3.1. You should devote seven, five or at least three days to the practice of the body, consisting in the position of the vajra and relaxation in the natural condition. (Total minimum of 3 days.)
   3.2. You should devote seven, five or at least three days to the practice of the voice, consisting in the exercise of the HUM and relaxation in the natural condition. (Total minimum of 3 days.)
   3.3. You should devote seven, five or at least three days to each of the five methods (of the five colours) of the practice of the mind, consisting in the exercise of concentration on the letter A and relaxation in the natural condition. (Total minimum of 15 days.)

THE SEVEN SEMDZINS

1. The Semdzin on the symbol of the white A.
2. The Semdzin on the syllable PHAT.
3. The Semdzin on the joyous laughter of the wrathful manifestations.
4. The Semdzin on the struggle of the Asuras.
5. The Semdzin on the letter RAM.
6. The Semdzin on the HUM that chases thoughts.
7. The Semdzin on the Song of the Vajra.

You should engage diligently in each of these seven practices, devoting seven, five or at least three days to each of them. (Total minimum of 21 days.)

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The best thing would be to complete these practices before taking the Base Level examination. If this is not possible, in any case it is necessary to have completed them before taking the First Level examination, except for the Base Level mantra recitation which must be completed before the Third Level examination.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu